General Allenby and the campaign of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, June 1917 - November 1919.

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GENERAL ALLENBY AND THE CAMPAIGN OF THE EGYPTIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, JUNE 1917-NOVEMBER 1919

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with British policy in relation to General Edmund Allenby's command of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (E.E.F.) from June 1917 to November 1919. This thesis divides into two parts: until October 1918 the Palestine campaign of the E.E.F. is evaluated in terms of its position within wider British war strategy, and in particular it is shown how the campaign did very little to help Britain's efforts to defeat the Central powers during the First World War; with the armistice in October 1918 the focus is on the political and imperial aspects of the battlefield victories by Allenby which resulted in the occupation by the E.E.F. of Palestine and Syria. These non-military concerns come to the fore in the post-war peace settlements, and it is shown how the usefulness of the Palestine campaign extended beyond the war's end to November 1919 when the E.E.F. withdrew from Syria. This thesis reveals that the Palestine campaign needs to be analysed not just for its contribution to the defeat of the Central powers, but that it had a non-military dimension which centred round the need to provide Britain with negotiating strength at the Paris Peace Conference so as to provide for long-term British imperial security. Allenby's operations to October 1918 are, therefore, examined for more than just their military significance, and in this work a complete analysis of the Palestine campaign is undertaken. This thesis shows how too often the existing literature on the Palestine campaign concentrates either on the purely military aspect, or focuses on the formation of the modern Middle East. What is typically left out is the connection between the two. It is shown that the Palestine campaign was Clausewitzian in that operations were used as a means to further political ends, and that these political concerns influenced the conduct of the campaign. Allenby's central role in these matters means that this thesis comments on his role and position, not just as a military commander, but also in relation to the political and imperial aspects outlined above.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADMS	Assistant Director Medical Services
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AFC	Australian Flying Corps
ALH	Australian Light Horse
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division
AOH	Australian Official War History
APOC	Anglo-Persian Oil Company
AWM	Australian War Memorial (in Canberra)
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
Bde	Brigade
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
BGGS	Brigadier General-General Staff
BL	British Library
Cav	Cavalry
C-in-C	Commander in Chief
CCWP	Cabinet Committee on War Policy
CID	Committee of Imperial Defence
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CGS	Chief of General Staff
CO	Commanding Officer
CPO	Chief Political Officer
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress
DBFP	*Documents on British Foreign Policy*
DFPS	*Détachement Français de Palestine et Syrie*
DMC	Desert Mounted Corps (the EEFs cavalry corps)
DMO	Director of Military Operations
EC	Eastern Committee
EEF	Egyptian Expeditionary Force
FO	Foreign Office
FRUS	Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States
GHQ	General Headquarters (of the EEF)
GOC	General Officer Commanding (i.e. commanding officer)
GS	General Staff
GSO	General Staff Officer
ICC	Imperial Camel Corps (camel brigade with the EEF)
Int	Intelligence
IOL	India Office Library (London)
IWC	Imperial War Cabinet
IWM	Imperial War Museum
LG	Lloyd George
LH	Liddell Hart
LHCMA	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives (at King's College)
LSHTM	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
NAA	Northern Arab Army (the regular element of Feisal's Arab force)
NAM	National Army Museum (London)
NLA	National Library of Australia (Canberra)

NZMRB	New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade
NZOH	*New Zealand Official History*
ML	Mitchell Library (Sydney)
OE	Ottoman Empire
OETA	Occupied Enemy Territory Administration
PID	Political Intelligence Department (part of the Foreign Office)
PO	Political Officer
Pol	Political
RAF	Royal Air Force
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
RUSI	*Journal of the Royal United Services Institute (or Institution)*
7P	*Seven Pillars of Wisdom*
S & S	*Soldiers and Statesmen*
Serai	A caravanserai (in Chapter Five refers to the Town Hall)
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies
SWC	Supreme War Council
2i/c	Second in Command
TE	Thomas Edward Lawrence
TPC	Turkish Petroleum Company
Vali	The civil governor of a Turkish province or vilayet
WC	War Cabinet
WD	War Diary
WO	War Office

PREFACE

My main acknowledgement is to my supervisor, Dr Brian Holden Reid, for patiently going through my draft chapters and providing invaluable advice and encouragement. This thesis owes much to his supervision and efforts to make me write in a cogent and thoughtful way. Professor Brian Bond and Dr David French helped at various stages of my studies and I owe them both an acknowledgement for the time they gave. At the archive repositories that I visited I am particularly indebted to Miss Patricia Methven at the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, and Mr James Taylor at the Imperial War Museum. Dr Peter Stanley and Ms Margaret Thompson at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, made my stay in Australia pleasant and fruitful.

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NOTE

Throughout this thesis the terms 'Turkish' and 'Turks' are used, usually in reference to the army of the Ottoman empire during the First World War. Turkey did not come into existence until the final collapse of what remained of the Ottoman empire from 1922-23, and the use of these terms is, strictly speaking, inaccurate. However, most of the Ottoman army units involved in fighting the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in Palestine were Turkish racially (in that the recruits came from Anatolian Turkey, spoke Turkish as their mother tongue, and were Muslims). The best Ottoman units tended to be composed of Anatolian Turks, and the literature of the time — albeit usually western European — invariably refers to the opponents of the E.E.F. as 'Turkish'. The term 'Turk' was a pejorative one, and the Kemalist régime after the war discovered that the Turkish 'language' did not have a word for 'Turkey'.[1] It seems pedantic continually to refer to the 'Turks' as 'Ottomans', and readers will allow some imprecision in the use of these terms in this thesis.

There is also some ambiguity with the use of 'British' in reference to the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. This thesis, on occasion, uses 'British' in connection to a multi-national army made up with very sizeable contingents of Australians, Indians, New Zealanders and others (including French and Italian). This is not intended as a slight on the thousands from the British empire and elsewhere who became casualties in the campaign in Palestine. It is also hoped that the liberal use of the term 'Arab' does not lay this thesis open to misinterpretation. When 'Arab' is written in this thesis it invariably refers to the Hashemites and/or Emir Feisal's Northern Arab Army rather than 'Arab' in the wider sense of nationalism, culture and/or language. The terms 'Palestine', 'Trans-Jordan', 'Lebanon' and 'Syria' are also used widely in this thesis, but did not legally come into existence as states until after the war. These were, however, widely used geographic terms of reference, and refer to the Ottoman *vilayets* of Syria and Aleppo (Syria and Trans-Jordan), and the *vilayet* of Beirut and the *sanjaks* of Jerusalem and Lebanon (Palestine and Lebanon).[2]

With regard to footnotes I have cited the archival reference first, then originator and recipient of document, and finally date. Readers will allow some leeway to this rule as different archive centres and documents have peculiar referencing systems. If a reader wants to check any footnotes my system should allow easy access to the original document. With quotations original grammar is kept within quotes.

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[1] E.Kedourie (ed), *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (1970) pp.49, 64.
[2] See map in G.Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (1945) facing p.176.

A final caveat is needed for the transliteration of Arabic names. I have used basic Anglicised spellings. Thus 'Amman becomes Amman, Dera'a to Deraa, and Ma'an (or Maᶜān) to Maan. With names such as Nūrī al-Saᶜid (or Nuri al-Sa'id) and Jaᶜfar Pasha al-ᶜAskarī (or Ja'far Pasha al-'Askari) they are changed to Nuri as-Said and Jafar Pasha al-Askari. In all cases it is fairly apparent whom or what is being referred to. In all these matters I have tried to be consistent.

INTRODUCTION

> No-one starts a war — or, rather, no-one in his senses should do so — without being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it. (Karl von Clausewitz quoted in Dominick Graham and Shelford Bidwell, *Tug of War: The battle for Italy 1943-1945* (1986) p.15.)

> Officers I met seemed to have shed Gallipoli and to be advancing almost with exhilaration into a new hope, coupled in their minds with the arrival of a new General who, they said, had left France owing to a row, but who suited them well enough. To be told off by this new General was like being blown from the muzzle of a gun which, however, when you regained the ground, seemed to bear you no malice. (Ronald Storrs, *Memoirs* (1972) p.270.)

With Lawrence James's 1993 biography of Field Marshal Viscount Edmund Allenby, there are now four studies devoted to this general's life.[1] While Raymond Savage's work is uncritical, Brian Gardner, Archibald Wavell and James have all produced robust analyses of Allenby. This thesis is not another biography of Allenby, and neither is it solely a campaign history of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (E.E.F.). The British, Australian, and New Zealand official histories examine the campaign in detail, and there are numerous unit and personal accounts which reveal the battles, tactics and personal experiences of the fighting.[2]

The aim here is to evaluate Allenby's command of the E.E.F., and to relate his generalship to the wider question of war strategy in the First World War as decided by the War Cabinet in London. The assumption here is that the existing corpus on the E.E.F. either deals with the purely military aspects of the E.E.F.s campaign, or concentrates on the politics behind the formation of the modern Middle East, 1914-20. What is typically left out is the connection between the two.[3] For instance, in the just published volume on cavalry operations in Palestine from 1914-19 by the Marquess of Anglesey, it is pointed out

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[1] R.Savage, *Allenby of Armageddon* (1925); A Wavell, *Allenby: A Study in Greatness* (1940) (second volume *Allenby in Egypt* (1943)); B.Gardner, *Allenby* (1965) and L.James, *Imperial Warrior: The Life and Times of Field Marshal Viscount Allenby 1861-1936* (1993).

[2] For British history see ft.20 below; H S Gullett, *Official History of Australia in the War, Volume VII, The Australian Imperial Force in Sinai and Palestine* (1984 reprint) (hereafter *Australian Official History*); C.Guy Powles, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine, Volume III of the Official History of New Zealand's Effort in the Great War* (1922) (hereafter *New Zealand Official History).* The Turkish account of the campaign is not readily available to the public (see comment under published primary sources in bibliography to this thesis).

[3] One notable exception to this is Elie Kedourie's 'The Capture of Damascus, 1 October 1918' in *The Chatham House Version and other Middle-Eastern Studies* (1984). See also Kedourie, *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire 1914-21* (1987 reprint).

that 'this work is not concerned' with political matters relating to Allenby's operations.[4] This remark is made in connection with the fall of Damascus in October 1918 at the end of Allenby's campaign. As Brian Bond points out reviewing Anglesey's volume: 'this is regimental history on a grand scale'.[5] The approach of this thesis is always to relate the fighting in Palestine to possible strategic, political and imperial gains for Britain which could flow from victory on the battlefield. It will be shown that acts such as the capture of Damascus had a non-military importance for Britain beyond the obvious need to defeat the Ottoman empire.

The subject of war strategy, 1914-18, is too vast to be dealt with in any depth in this study. Leonard Smith's remark in his study of mutinies in the French army in 1917 shows some of the limitations for the historian who has to choose a, 'unit of investigation large enough to make possible meaningful generalizations, but small enough to study intensively'.[6] With this disclaimer those aspects of strategy that impinged upon the Palestine campaign need to be critically explored. Allenby's actions and capabilities were markedly affected by the desires of the British War Cabinet, and in turn the decision-makers in London were influenced by Allenby's successes and failures.

The first part of this thesis will evaluate the Palestine campaign militarily and strategically, and assess the E.E.F.s contribution to the defeat of the Central powers. Were the operations of the E.E.F. a side-show, and only marginal to the main campaign in France? Did the fighting in Palestine do anything to win the war? However, to concentrate on military operations and their relationship to Britain's war-effort, is to ignore possible Clausewitzian aspects to the E.E.F. operations, as his oft-quoted maxim reminds us: 'war is a mere continuation of policy by other means'.[7] Discussing Clausewitz and his influence on German strategic thinking Williamson Murray quotes the following: 'The political objective is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose'.[8] The political and imperial dimensions of the E.E.F.s campaign are dealt with in the latter part of this thesis, and here the aim is to locate the Palestine campaign within the wider context of what Britain believed — or hoped — that she could gain for her empire from the war. There is an overlap in this thesis in that by Chapter Four the focus will

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[4]Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry 1816-1919, Volume 5, Egypt, Palestine and Syria, 1914-1919* (1994) p.329.

[5]*Times Literary Supplement*, 27 Jan.1995, p.36.

[6]L.Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division During World War I* (1994) p.17.

[7]C.von Clausewitz, *On War* (Penguin 1982) p.119.

[8]Murray, 'Clausewitz: Some Thoughts on What the Germans got Right', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, June/September 1986 (special issue edited by M.I Handel), p.267 (quote from *On War* (1976) p.87).

gradually move from analysing the Palestine campaign in terms of war strategy, to be replaced by examination of the E.E.F. operations in relation to post-war strategy.

The Palestine campaign is somewhat analogous to the Burma campaign in the Second World War: what purpose did the fighting serve in defeating the enemy? Did the campaign have a political dimension beyond the fighting? It is undoubtedly true to say that 'organised violence creates its own momentum', and this provides a partial explanation for the Palestine campaign.[9] However, it is the view of this author that the Palestine campaign was prosecuted not only because politicians such as the British war leader David Lloyd George saw in it a way of defeating Germany, but also because the campaign could provide for the stability of the British empire after the war. The argument that war is a potential political tool explains why this thesis extends its examination a year beyond the surrender of the Ottoman empire on 30 October 1918. In the autumn of 1919 Britain withdrew Allenby's army of occupation from Syria, and a status quo *post-bellum* was established with British and French rule in much of the Middle East. This situation was codified with the mandate system set up at the San Remo conference in 1920, but was almost inevitable once Britain had removed her support for Emir Feisal and his nascent Arab régime in Syria.[10] Why did these events happen? And why should Britain pursue a campaign that took her beyond Aleppo and into Cilicia, and then decide to withdraw? Was this well thought-out Machiavellian cunning, or simply the result of *ad hoc* policy decisions resulting from an imperfect knowledge of how the war, and the peace, would end?

These policy decisions are ones, 'now dead and gone which once upon a time were the designs and choices of living men'.[11] Nevertheless, they still inform the present in that the boundaries and political systems created from the success of the E.E.F. operations have had remarkable resilience, especially considering subsequent upheavals in the Middle East. Taking into account all that has happened since 1920, the mandate boundaries and inter-war decisions by the mandate authorities are still an important part of understanding the contemporary Middle East. The mandate system grew out of the successes of Allenby's expeditionary force. The First World War witnessed the collapse of the Ottoman empire, and its replacement in most of the Middle East by new governments. Allenby and the E.E.F. were important participants in these events. Maps of the pre-war Ottoman administrative divisions show how different the post-1918

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[9] B.Holden Reid, 'Rationality and Irrationality in Union Strategy, April 1861-March 1862', *War in History*, March 1994, p.23.

[10] See J.Gelvin, 'The Social Origins of Popular Nationalism in Syria: Evidence for a New Framework', *International Journal of the Middle East*, November 1994, p.648

[11] Kedourie, *Islam in the Modern World* (1980) p.313.

boundaries were, and how little they accorded with what had been before.[12] Britain's established policy with regard to the 'Eastern Question' before the First World War had been to support the Ottoman empire. After 1914 this was abandoned, and the Constantinople agreements of 1915 gave the Straits region round Istanbul to Russia. This presaged the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 which further divided the 'sick man of Europe' between Britain, France and Russia, and further emphasised the radical change in British policy from support of the Ottoman empire to one which would lead to her eventual dismemberment.[13]

* * * *

In this thesis the first five chapters analyse the course of the E.E.F. campaign up to the armistice with Turkey signed at Mudros (on the Greek island of Lésvos) on 30 October 1918. Before doing this it is necessary to clarify some misconceptions surrounding Allenby. The first difficulty is that a hagiography has supposedly been built up round Allenby and his campaign in Palestine. This exalting of Allenby has apparently distorted objective analysis. This combines with a second set of assumptions about the command of Archibald Murray, Allenby's predecessor as commander-in-chief of the E.E.F. to June 1917, and whether his tenure has been subject to unfair criticism. The implication is that Allenby's standing increases by being placed next to a previous commander who is perceived as something of a failure.[14] The remainder of this Introduction will show that while an aura of sorts has developed round Allenby, it is neither as important, or undeserved, as is claimed; also that Murray, if anything, deserves more deprecation than he has received for his period in charge in Egypt.

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In his 1991 *Journal of Strategic Studies* article Jonathan Newell put the dilemma thus:-

> The First World War historian faces a difficult task if he attempts a fresh evaluation of the Palestine career of Field-Marshal Viscount Allenby of Megiddo and Felixstowe. Almost immediately it becomes clear to him

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[12]See for instance the map facing p.176 in G.Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (1945).

[13]H.Temperley's *England and the Near East: The Crimea* (1936) discusses Britain's long standing pre-1914 support for the declining Ottoman Empire.

[14]The argument supporting Murray comes from J.Newell's, 'British Military Policy in Egypt and Palestine August 1914 to June 1917' (Ph.D. thesis Univ. of London 1990); developed in Newell, 'Allenby and the Palestine Campaign', in B.Bond (ed), *The First World War and British Military History* (1991); and Newell, 'Learning the Hard Way: Allenby in Egypt and Palestine 1917-1919', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.14, Sept 1991, pp.363-387.

> that most of the available published works present a distorted portrait of the war time commander.[15]

This point is developed in Newell's chapter on Allenby in Brian Bond's book on First World War historiography: 'Indeed, at times one cannot help feeling that anyone writing about Allenby prior to June 1917 and his arrival in Egypt does so with one eye to the future'.[16] Reading the various biographies on Allenby one wonders if Newell's opinions are not exaggerated. Leaving aside Raymond Savage's sycophantic 1925 work (Savage spent some time on Allenby's staff), biographies are rather problematic things. The author gets drawn into the subject if he is to excite the readers' interest, yet the result often tends to one extreme or the other. Having said this, both Archibald Wavell and Brian Gardner have written reasonable and not uncritical accounts on Allenby.[17] Again, Lawrence James's more recent biography on Allenby makes no attempt to hide its vigorous approach to its subject.[18]

Drawing the balance in biographies is not easy. If the author is too sympathetic then the biography is seen as tame and uncritical, while if the work tends to the opposite extreme it is often regarded as unnecessarily hostile and aimed at those interested in salacious details.[19] Too often analysis becomes invective, although this can be a good way of increasing the sales of a biography. The problem with Allenby lies in the concentration on him as an individual, rather than an analysis of the military events in the Levant, set within their political-imperial context: this last is a main aim of this thesis.

Certainly, the two volume *Official History* of the Palestine campaign is a rather dry work, and closer inspection of its accounts of tactical and strategical episodes in the fighting makes one, on occasion, look for a little more analysis and a little less narrative in the official account.[20] Clive Garsia, who had been a G.S.O.1 with the 54th Division, made the same point in correspondence with the compilers of the *Official History* in 1929:-

> but I have not been able to resist the desire to see somewhere stated, in the cases of actions where we got the worst of it through unsuitable

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[15]Newell, 'Hard Way', *JSS*, p.363.

[16]Newell, 'Allenby', *First World War*, p.203.

[17]On Wavell's two-volume biography and its sense of balance see Holden Reid's prefaces to the 1993 Gregg Revival reprints of Wavell's biography. Gardner was also aware of the need for scholarly analysis: see his correspondence with Liddell Hart in LH papers 1/305/1-48.

[18]James, *Allenby*, pp.xii-xiii & ch.18.

[19]As Oscar Wilde observed, 'Every great man nowadays has his disciples, and it is always Judas who writes the biography' (quoted in *The New York Review of Books*, 22 June 1995, p.25).

[20]C.Falls and G.Macmunn, *Military Operations Egypt and Palestine* (HMSO 1928 & 1930) two volumes. Hereafter known as *Official History*. Macmunn was not up to the task of writing the official history and so Falls did the work with Macmunn's name appearing as a sop on vol.i: see CAB16/52/Paper 20, pp.7-8.

> plans, bad orders, faulty leadership etc etc that such was the fact. The chapters under consideration read rather like a German account of the Franco-Prussian war in which failures to obtain the whole of the objectives sought might be attributed to the weather, to unexpected resistance on the part of the enemy, to weariness of the troops: but never to such things as I have mentioned above.[21]

Writing to Guy Dawnay, Allenby's Brigadier General-General Staff, about the Australian official history, and its less staid approach, George Macmunn, working on the British history, observed: 'Our official history is not meant to be a criticism'.[22]

If much of the military analysis of the Palestine campaign is uncritical, Allenby's role in the campaign has also been subject to some distortion. The main explanation for this is the widely held belief of a generation of men lost in the carnage and mud of France. The emotive closing scene of the film *Oh! What a Lovely War* (1969) with its vista of grave upon grave symbolised popular perceptions of the futility of the war in France.[23] The gain of a few thousand yards of shell-damaged land in Flanders could be measured against Allenby's cavalcade through Palestine.

General Allenby's reputation has been inflated because of the perceived hopelessness of the war in France. However, one should not place undue emphasis on this exaggeration of Allenby's capabilities, and the evidence points to Allenby as an impressive figure whose reputation stands up even without the indirect benefit of hostile attitudes towards the conduct of operations in France.

Brian Holden Reid's remark on T.E. Lawrence ('of Arabia') shows how operations in peripheral war zones would be juxtaposed to the generally static warfare in France: 'a glamorous figure thrown up by the last years of the Great War. His glamour shone all the more brightly because of the brutal and indecisive character of the First World War which shattered the romantic illusions cherished by so many in 1914.'[24] In Palestine poignancy was added by the religious attachment to the lands of the Bible, and which turned Allenby into a modern-day Richard 'Lionheart' reversing the defeat of 1187.[25] The religious element of Allenby's operations as his forces campaigned over the Holy Land appears regularly in correspondence. This was in an era when, 'the average citizen had a far more detailed grasp of the Authorised, or King James Version of the Bible

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[21]CAB45/79, Authors E-M, Garsia to Director Historical Section, 26 Feb 1929.
[22]Dawnay papers, 69/21/3, Macmunn to Dawnay, 16 Nov [1924?].
[23]For a discussion of this see Bond (ed), *First World War and British Military History* (1991).
[24]Holden Reid, 'T.E.Lawrence and his Biographers', in Bond (ed), *The First World War and British Military History*, p.227.
[25]*Punch*, 19 Dec.1917, has a picture of Richard I looking on Jerusalem & caption reads: 'The Last Crusade, Coeur-de-Lion (looking down on the Holy City). "My Dream Comes True".'

than today; indeed, we might go as far as to say that it was almost a part of the popular consciousness of the time'.[26] In the Imperial War Cabinet meeting of 20 March 1917 Lloyd George remarked to Maj.-Gen. Frederick Maurice (the Director of Military Operations — D.M.O.) apropos Murray's advance: 'We have entered the land of the Philistines I believe?'[27]

While this biblical connection needs to be considered in evaluating the E.E.F.s campaign, the men of the E.E.F. were far from righteous in their behaviour in Egypt and Palestine. Relations between E.E.F. soldiers and the local people were very poor. This was especially true of the Australian and New Zealand soldiers. There was violence, indiscipline, drunkenness, and a worrying rise in venereal disease. In December 1918 Australian and New Zealand troops killed some forty Arabs at the village of Surafend in Palestine.[28] That the soldiers of the E.E.F. were far from virtuous indicates that any aggrandisement of Allenby's operations needs to be put into context.

In fact, while it is true that Allenby's reputation benefited from factors such as the attritional war in France, and fighting a campaign in the lands of the Bible, much of the attempt to re-evaluate his 'reputation' is tilting at windmills. Newell makes the valid point that:-

> A new generation of military historians needs to rediscover Allenby and his triumphs and mistakes — for there were some — in Palestine. There is much that can be learnt from Allenby the commander rather than Allenby the crusader or Allenby the moral giant. Surely it is now possible to view him with objective detachment.[29]

However, some detachment is also required in evaluating Murray. Here Newell is on less firm ground in promoting the idea that Murray was harshly treated and did not receive the necessary *matériel* to conduct operations. In his doctoral thesis Newell argues that Murray was the victim of, 'a failure in strategy at the highest level in London'.[30] But Allenby was equally a victim of capricious policy decisions. By measuring Allenby against Murray one sees how impressive Allenby was when compared with Murray's period in charge of the E.E.F. It soon

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[26]Newell, 'Allenby', *First World War*, p.194. Col R Meinertzhagen in his diary refers (31 Oct.1917) to Allenby's campaign as the 'seventh crusade'.

[27]CAB23/43, IWC, 20 Mar 1917, p 4

[28]K.Fewster, 'The Wazza riots 1915', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, April 1984, pp.47-53; S Brugger, *Australians and Egypt 1914-1919* (1980) & Herbert papers, diary, 10 Mar.1916. Surafend see Brugger, pp 82-83 and Falls, *Armageddon 1918* (1964) pp.175-177. Allenby was furious over the Surafend killings: see letter to *The Times* 29 May 1964 from A.F. Nayton (not Naylor as reported by James, p.262). For venereal diseases. J.Barrett & P.E.Deane, *The Australian Army Medical Corps in Egypt* (1918) ch.viii and W.Macpherson et al, *Official History of the War: Medical Services* (1923) vol.ii, ch.iii.

[29]Newell, 'Allenby', *First World War*, p.225.

[30]Newell, *Ph D. thesis* 'British Military Policy in Egypt', p.423.

becomes apparent that Allenby, even with his faults, was a rather extraordinary man whose command of the E.E.F. made a big difference to what that force was able to achieve.

Jonathan Newell writes how if, 'Allenby has been overshadowed by Lawrence, the field marshal's predecessor in Egypt, General Sir Archibald Murray, has almost been forgotten by virtue of the lavish praise heaped upon Allenby. Lawrence and Allenby must both bear some of the responsibility for this neglect.'[31] Leaving aside the vast topic of the many biographies written about T.E. Lawrence, is it true to say that Murray has been neglected because of Lawrence's romantic image and Allenby's connection with Lawrence? That Lawrence's, and to some degree Allenby's, reputations may have been somewhat inflated, does not *ipso facto* absolve Murray.

Jonathan Newell's attempt at revisionism is special pleading for Murray: a sin he abhors in those writing on Allenby. Taking into account hindsight, and that people writing memoirs can have particular axes to grind, it is very hard in the welter of accounts on Murray to find much sympathy for him. Newell quotes H. Wyndham Deedes, a political intelligence officer with the E.E.F., for a favourable comment, and Guy Dawnay was not always uncritical of Murray.[32] These are, however, isolated examples of approbation for Murray, and Gladys Skelton in her biography of Wyndham Deedes is also critical of Murray.[33] Allenby's arrival really did mark a new start for the E.E.F., and this was the perception of the soldiers in Palestine. Morale and the soldiers' trust in their command rose, and for any army this was — indeed, still is — crucial. All the historical evidence shows that the men of the E.E.F. did not have faith in Murray's leadership, and all too often they never even saw him at the front line. The conditions in the desert were most unpleasant with extremes of temperature, huge biting insects and a lack of water which restricted personal hygiene.[34] In this situation visits by commanders were greatly appreciated and helped lift morale and ameliorate the boredom and heat.[35]

Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen (a G.S.O.2 in the E.E.F.) indicated the mood at headquarters (G.H.Q.) when he recorded in his diary that Murray

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[31]Newell, 'Allenby', *First World War*, p.212.

[32]Newell, 'Allenby', *First World War*, p 223 & Dawnay papers, 69 21/2, letters to wife 30 Apr.& 21 July 1917 and 69/21/5, 'The Sinai Campaign 1916-17'. In Deedes papers, box 2: file 1 Deedes praises Allenby and says of Murray 'he was always so nice'.

[33]*Deedes Bey: A Study of Sir Wyndham Deedes 1883-1923* (1942), p.270 (Skelton wrote under the pseudonym John Presland).

[34]There is a selection of vicious looking insects collected from the Palestine campaign in the First World War display in the basement of the Imperial War Museum, London.

[35]The boredom and physical hardships associated with the Palestine campaign come across vividly in the oral reminiscences of ordinary soldiers kept at the Imperial War Museum.

departed, 'to the regret of no member of the force'.[36] When Lloyd George in his *War Memoirs* is hostile to Murray, Newell sees this as, 'laughably hostile and redolent with bitterness'.[37] Yet the Prime Minister was not alone in his attitude. Lord Esher in his journal of 14 June 1917 recorded: 'Allenby will have his work cut out in Syria. Archie Murray's troops are despondent and beaten. He is very unpopular. "He feeds out of your hand, and then bites it", said Mark Sykes to Lawrence.'[38]

The spirits of the E.E.F. after the two March-April battles of Gaza were at a nadir: 'General Murray had proved himself a thorough, methodical, but unenterprising leader in Egypt...in battle Murray had not shown the necessary drive.'[39] Lloyd George, as will be shown, had ambitious plans for Palestine, and it is a moot point what Murray would have achieved given the extra *matériel* Allenby received. Allenby seems to have been a man who inspired through his own presence and drive: 'My word he [Allenby] is a different man to Murray... The Egyptian Expeditionary Force is already awakening from its lethargic sleep under Murray.'[40] This is not to say that Allenby did not make mistakes: simply that he was not only an improvement over Murray, but was perceived as such by those doing the fighting out in Palestine. By the spring of 1917 Murray's army was despondent and depressed, hardly an auspicious start for an offensive.

In a post-war oral recording one of the Australian Lighthorsemen who served in Palestine remembered how after, 'the second battle of Gaza we were fed up — we considered we hadn't had the leadership we were due for and it seemed to be one blunder after another. Then the arrival of Allenby, morale rose.'[41] This was by no means an isolated sentiment, and one echoed again and again by those in the E.E.F.[42] Henry Gullett, the author of the Sinai and Palestine volume of the Australian official history, sums up the differences between Allenby and Murray in his private papers, and his note on Murray is worth quoting in full:-

> Regimental officers and men never saw Murray except during occasional visits in state. Contrast with Allenby. Major Richardson - 'I don't know how many times I have shaken hands with Allenby. He visited us at Asluge [in the desert, see map 1] when we were getting water there, moved among the men and talked with them. He attended the 2nd

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[36]R.Meinertzhagen, *Army Diary 1899-1926* (1960) p.213 (from original diaries 29 June 1917).
[37]Newell, 'Allenby', *First World War*, p.214. Reference is to Lloyd George, *War Memoirs* (1938) vol.ii, p.1075.
[38]Esher papers, 2/19, journal, 14 June 1917.
[39]M.Cocker, *Richard Meinertzhagen* (1989) pp.97-98.
[40]Meinertzhagen quoted in Cocker, p.99: from original entry in Meinertzhagen diaries, 15 July 1917. See 16 June entry for satisfaction within EEF staff at Murray's departure.
[41]L.Pollock, IWM, 4200/B/A.
[42]For instance Lord Harding, IWM, 8736/50, typescript of oral recording, p.57 and A.Bluett, *With Our Army in Palestine* (1919) pp.182-183.

> Brigade sports meeting soon after he came to Palestine. Canteen was unfortunately open sometime before Allenby arrived...Drunks came and could not be with strained from getting touch with C. in C. Struck matches on his car, almost leaned on him. The tighter they were the closer they wished to get to him. Allenby took it well and afterwards wrote appreciative note to Ryrie.' Murray's occasional visit to front in luxurious train ferried across canal but rarely left train. Once his train held up troops of 2nd L.H.bde, for 5 hours.[43]

This description of Allenby hardly fits a man who was nicknamed 'The Bull', and who was considered a strict disciplinarian. (Indeed: 'there is no place for a nice man in war. Nice men don't win wars.'[44]) Allenby really seems to have infused new life into the E.E.F., while under Murray, 'the High Command had completely lost the confidence of subordinate commanders'; a situation which fed down the line, 'until the private soldier mistrusted his lance-corporal'.[45]

With Murray it is not even apparent that he could have dealt with visiting troops out in the desert. Murray was very much an 'office general', and his staff-side career put him at a disadvantage in having to talk to rankers and lift their spirits; physically he was not up to travelling over bumpy tracks in the sweltering heat to visit units in the desert.[46] Allenby, by contrast, had experienced field command of everything from a troop in Zululand and Bechuanaland, through a squadron, regiment, column (in effect a brigade), division, corps and army.[47]

The above quotations are far from being isolated remarks, yet a revisionist view of Allenby would have us believe that there is a conspiracy unfairly to raise his reputation. Murray did not seem to draw the same admiration as Allenby, and the explanation may be the obvious one. It is like William of Occam's law (or razor) that if one has the obvious answer to a problem there is no need to look for other more complicated solutions.

Jonathan Newell draws a critical inference from C.S. Forester's *The General* (1936) which is supposedly based on Allenby.[48] Forester's general has many of the 'Colonel Blimp' attributes the public expected, although Forester's portrayal is far from unsympathetic.[49] Even on this count, Allenby seems to draw a personal admiration lacking in accounts on Murray. That Forester used

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[43]Gullett papers, AWM40/69 'Murray' (syntax in original).

[44]Comment by Field-Marshal Bernard Montgomery's chief intelligence officer (from *The Spectator*, 11 June 1994, p.58).

[45]Allenby papers, 6/VIII/74, Russell to Wavell, 6 Aug.1937, p.2.

[46]Quote from preface by Holden Reid to *Allenby: A Study in Greatness* (Gregg 1993).

[47]Wavell, *Allenby in Egypt* (1943) p.19.

[48]Newell, 'Allenby', *First World War*, p.210. Newell quotes Wavell as source and says Wayland-Leigh (Forester's general) based on Allenby: edition this author read gives general's name as Curzon. See J.Keegan & A.Wheatcroft, *Who's Who in Military History* (1991) p.14.

[49]Indeed, Powell & Pressburger's film *The Life & Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943) provides a sympathetic, well worked (and funny) portrayal of an 'old-style' general.

Allenby as a model for a *composite* fictitious leader in his popular book, may be because he was indeed, at least relative to other generals of his era, a rather *simpatico* character. The comments of John Shea, the commander of Allenby's 60th Division, on Allenby's sadness and distress on hearing of the death of his son in France in 1917 are moving. Shea's remarks show that while Allenby had to be necessarily tough on matters such as discipline, he still had a very human side as a father who had just lost his only son.[50]

General Allenby's moving of his headquarters to Khan Yunis, just behind the front, draws the critical inference from Newell that this helped provide the catalyst for the 1919 Egyptian revolt. Thus, a supposedly beneficial decision to be closer to the fighting becomes something detrimental, and considering the scale and upheaval of the 1919 disturbances a serious accusation.[51] P.G. Elgood, used by Newell to prove his charge, comments on Murray thus: 'If communications were safe and supplies abundant, the spirit of the fighting troops was less promising. Position warfare was affecting the morale of the foot soldier.' While with Allenby Elgood noted how the, 'curt and contemptuous comments of the new Commander-in-Chief upon the drill and the bearing of the rank and file produced effect, while his rigorous personality infused new life in to the officers'.[52]

The Egyptian revolt had at its centre a mix of causes. The war, while having some beneficial results for the Egyptian fellahin, led to demands for labour that were very harshly implemented by the British authorities. This, coupled with rising nationalism and an unsympathetic attitude by the British towards Egyptian self-determination, provoked the revolt. This Elgood explains, and to ascribe the revolt to Allenby's shifting of his headquarters is really rather tendentious.[53] Indeed, as the adage runs, 'nothing succeeds like success', and on 3 December 1917, six days before Jerusalem's capture, Reginald Wingate, the British High Commissioner in Cairo, wrote in a letter: 'In Egypt, General Allenby's recent victories have had an excellent effect on public opinion and rendered the strong pro-Turkish parties almost mute for several days'.[54]

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[50]Shea oral recording (typescript), IWM4227, vol.v, pp.41-42.
[51]Newell, 'Allenby', *First World War*, ft.p.217 and Newell, *Ph.D. thesis* 'British Military Policy in Egypt', p.420. Newell quotes P.G.Elgood, *Egypt and the Army* (1924) as a source.
[52]Elgood, *Egypt & Army*, pp.304-305.
[53]Elgood, chs.XV & XVI (see FO371/3715/56494 for the harsh working conditions of the Egyptian Labour Corps).
[54]Wingate papers, 147/1/26-29, Wingate to Archer, 3 Dec.1917.

It remains to analyse the first two battles of Gaza and show that Allenby's arrival really did make a difference. To draw attention to the raised morale of the E.E.F. is necessary, as much of what is to follow in this thesis can be viewed as partial criticism of Allenby. To avoid inconsistency, some comparison of what came before is necessary. This shows how much Allenby was an improvement over Murray, and looking for faults in Allenby's command should be viewed in light of Murray's deficiencies. It is also necessary to consider the strategical and political constraints from on high that bound Allenby's actions. These constraints would equally have affected Murray if he had stayed in command of the E.E.F., and one can only speculate as to whether he could have coped in the trying situations that Allenby often found himself.

What is remarkable about the two defeats at Gaza in March and April of 1917 is that they were Murray's doing. Murray not only exercised a weak grip on the command system in the first Gaza battles, but he was not under any particular pressure from London to attack and thus the two defeats were a result of his poor planning. In a 1928 speech Frederick Maurice encapsulated Murray's situation. Maurice, who was the D.M.O. in 1917, pointed out that Lloyd George's new coalition government:-

> looking for some compensation in the East for the unsatisfactory state of affairs in the West, instructed the General Staff to inquire of General Murray what were his plans for operations...Sir Archibald replied that for an invasion of Palestine he would need two more divisions and, if possible, some additional mounted troops...it was impossible to provide the reinforcements for which Sir Archibald asked. Accordingly, on the 11th January [1917], he was instructed that an offensive campaign in Palestine would be deferred until the autumn...[55]

Frederick Maurice went on to observe that to prepare for the autumn offensive the bridging and securing of the Wadi Ghuzze, and the occupation of Gaza town, which at the time was lightly defended, seemed tactically correct and would provide more attractive summer billets.[56] Thus originated the first battle of Gaza in March 1917 of which the *Official History* says: 'Few actions of the late war have been the subject of greater differences of opinion than the First Battle of Gaza'.[57] The mounted troops of the Anzac and Imperial Mounted divisions moved around Gaza in a bold operation that surrounded the town. This was achieved, as the Camel Corps commander remembered, 'without any trouble

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[55]Maurice. 'The Campaigns in Palestine and Egypt 1914-18 in relation to the General Strategy of the War', *The Army Quarterly*, April-July 1929, p.18. Copy of a lecture delivered at the University of London Dec.1928.
[56]*Ibid.*, p.18.
[57]*Official History*, vol.i, p.315

really', a view reinforced by Gullett who remarked on the first Gaza battle: 'We could have advanced right into town had we got the order in time'.[58] It should be noted that in March 1917 Gaza and its environs were lightly fortified. The Turks' surprise was so total that the mounted troops captured the unsuspecting commander (G.O.C.) of the Turkish 53rd Division as he drove forward in his staff car.[59]

The infantry assault then failed so the mounted troops had to withdraw. In fact, the mounted troops had on their own forced the Gaza garrison to the verge of surrender. Because of poor signals intelligence in deciphering intercepted Turkish orders, and general lack of effective communications within the E.E.F., the mounted troops were pulled out in a panic as it was believed that they were under threat. They were not in danger to the degree imagined, and the whole muddle at first Gaza raises the question of whether the attack would have succeeded if the mounted troops had been properly controlled so as to co-ordinate their assault from the rear of Gaza. Alec Hill, Harry Chauvel's biographer (Chauvel became the commander of Allenby's Desert Mounted Corps), remarks on the first battle: 'If the Anzacs were angry and frustrated they could not feel the bitterness of the infantry. They too had been withdrawn, but after suffering well over 3,000 casualties.'[60] The infantry had had to make a frontal assault with inadequate artillery in bright sunshine over open land against an enemy on higher ground. Philip Chetwode, in command of the mounted troops in the spring 1917 Gaza battles, wrote to Archibald Wavell in 1939 that the divisions at the first Gaza had only 28 guns per division, while at the second battle in April 1917 the 74th Division had no artillery at all.[61] Alec Hill concludes that the fundamental failure at the first battle of Gaza, 'was not one of intelligence nor even of staff work, bad as some of it was; it was a failure in command'.[62] Gullett supports this view in his notes, showing that it was not clear to the mounted troops that Gaza was the objective, leading to delay.[63] Hence, the troops were confused and an opportunity was missed. Granville Ryrie, the 2nd Australian Light Horse (A.L.H.) Brigade commander, wrote of his 'surprise' at the order to withdraw from Gaza, indicating shortcomings in a command system in

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[58]G.Langley (ICC brigadier), IWM, 4165/C/C; Gullett papers, AWM40/64, '1st Gaza'. The Australian film *The Lighthorsemen* (1987) has Kress von Kressenstein, the Turks' German commander, remarking: 'Sir Archibald Murray for he had captured the town but he's such a dunderhead he didn't know and withdrew his troops.'

[59]There is an amusing account of his capture and also details of the mistakes at first Gaza by I.Idriess in G.Chapman (ed), *Vain Glory: A miscellany of the Great War 1914-1918 written by those who fought in it on each side and on all fronts* (1968) pp.395-401.

[60]A.J.Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse: A Biography of General Sir Harry Chauvel* (1978) p.105.

[61]Allenby papers, 6/VIII/31, Chetwode to Wavell, 17 Feb.1939, p.2.

[62]Hill, *Chauvel*, p.106.

[63]Gullett papers, AWM40/64, '1st Gaza'.

which G.H.Q. had little idea of what its fighting troops were doing.[64] Ryrie refused to withdraw from his position beyond Gaza until he had the orders in writing, and the ease with which Ryrie's men remained beyond Gaza shows how confused Murray's staff were by the reported Turkish reinforcements being sent to relieve Gaza.[65]

General Murray then proceeded to worsen a situation of his own making, as Falls noted in his book on the battle of Megiddo, *Armageddon 1918*:-

> Murray next committed an unforgivable sin in sending home a misleading telegram which induced Roberston to believe a victory had been won and brought a congratulatory telegram from King George V. One incredible sentence ran: 'The operation was most successful and owing to the fog and waterless nature of the country round Gaza just fell short of a complete disaster to the enemy.' The consequence was that Robertson [the Chief of the Imperial General Staff — C.I.G.S.], anxious to fulfil the wishes of the Prime Minister, though personally not keen on the campaign, pressed Murray to resume the offensive, which Murray personally was loath to do.[66]

The Turks had no problem evaluating who was the victor of the battle. An observer with the New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade recollected how: 'It may be remembered that the first attack on Gaza was reported in the press as a British success. After the British withdrawal an enemy aeroplane dropped a message which said. "You beat us at communiqués, but we beat you at Gaza".'[67] According to Gullett the Turkish commander laughed in disbelief on discovering that the British had pulled back.[68]

General William Robertson (the C.I.G.S.), whose support for an offensive in Palestine was lackadaisical, was being forced into decisions against his better judgement. In 1926, writing to Brig.-Gen. James Edmonds compiling the British Western Front official history, Robertson pointed out how Murray's optimism constrained him. Robertson was trying to please the War Cabinet, 'as far as one could do so without serious danger'. Murray was forcing Robertson's hand and helping to serve Lloyd George's eastern strategy: 'the General Staff were really opposed to the Syrian Offensive, but for the sake of peace and quietness and in order to get the Prime Minister's consent to other requirements,

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[64]Ryrie papers, MS986/351-484, letter to wife, 30 Mar.1917.
[65]See Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry Volume 5*, ch.11.
[66]Falls, *Armageddon*, p.25. C.Cruttwell, *A History of the Great War 1914-1918* (1986) p.357 comments, 'Murray was hoist with his own petard'.
[67]A.Briscoe-Moore, *The Desert Mounted Rifleman in Sinai and Palestine* (1920) p.67.
[68]Gullett papers, AWM40/64, '1st Gaza'.

we had to agree to pushing on in the direction of Jerusalem to which he attached so much importance, and to which the General Staff attached none'.[69]

Lt.-Col. Maurice Hankey, in charge of the War Cabinet secretariat, recorded in his diary for 5 April 1917: 'War Cabinet in the afternoon, which discussed superseding of Sir A. Murray in Egypt on the grounds that he has not the energy and go to force through the Palestine expedition successfully'.[70] However, whether his second assault was successful or not would decide Murray's fate. The War Cabinet meeting of 5-6 April decided to re-examine the question of Murray's command after the impending offensive.[71] While Lloyd George seemed to have little faith in Murray, it was far from being the case that Murray was without backing in the War Cabinet. Apart from Robertson lending support in his position as C.I.G.S., politicians such as Andrew Bonar Law, Lord Milner and Lord Curzon seemed willing to trust Murray.[72]

What was not in doubt was Murray's fate after his second attack as his troops' morale was low, with divisions depleted and lacking in artillery, and the consequence was an almost inevitable defeat: 'If First Gaza was a costly near victory, Second Gaza was an even more costly total defeat'.[73] The Turks had been gradually entrenching themselves, and Murray's hopefulness was not confirmed as he unfolded his scheme, 'for 2nd Gaza to a group of very silent, depressed generals'.[74] As for the troops, their morale was reaching a new low with their awareness of 'wretched leadership'.[75] Murray's attack was simply a frontal assault, but without the heavy corps' artillery so necessary for such an operation. The result is outlined by Cyril Falls in no uncertain terms: 'The offensive, beginning on April 17, failed completely, despite the aid of a handful of ancient tanks, with heavy loss, and fearful slaughter in the division which had the main task in the advance against the road. For the most part the Turks sat in their redoubts and shot the division to pieces.'[76]

Jonathan Newell feels the fact that the *Official History* has little of merit to say on the second battle of Gaza is, 'unfair, for the planning phase of this battle is absolutely fascinating and contains much that was both imaginative and thought provoking'.[77] To which one is tempted to retort that history is riddled

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[69]CAB45/80, Authors N-Y, Robertson to Edmonds, 4 Feb.1926.
[70]Hankey papers, 1/1, vol.1, diary entry 5 Apr.1917.
[71]CAB23/44B/115(a), 5-6 Apr.1917, p.3. Should really be (b).
[72]*Ibid.* and CAB23/13/115(a), 'Military Command in Palestine', 5 Apr. 1917.
[73]Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry Volume 5*, p.105.
[74]AWM40/64, '2nd Gaza'.
[75]*Ibid.*
[76]Falls, *Armageddon*, p.26. For Hill it 'was Gallipoli all over again' (*Chauvel*, p.107). There is a pertinent analysis of the mishaps at the two Gaza battles by Liddell Hart in his 30 Jan.1928 (*Daily Telegraph*) review of *Official History* (LH papers 10/1928 17).
[77] Newell, *Ph D. thesis*, p 327.

with imaginative and wonderful ideas that have not worked; indeed, ones which have had disastrous results, as Murray proved once again. With Murray's failure not only was his dismissal assured, but London simply reverted to its previous plan for an autumn offensive.[78] Newell remarks, on the third battle of Gaza, that Allenby's decision to postpone the attack until all was ready, 'may well have been Allenby's most important contribution'.[79] Presumably this was a sentiment equally applicable to Murray, as James Edmonds pointed out reviewing Murray's *Despatches*: 'If Sir Archibald Murray had refused to attack Gaza until the troops that he thought necessary had been given him, he would have been within his rights, and many more lives would have been spared. As it was, his case can hardly be said to be made out.'[80] Basil Liddell Hart's comment on the 1915 second battle of Ypres seems apposite to the second battle of Gaza: 'To throw good money after bad is foolish. But to throw away men's lives where there is no reasonable chance of success, is criminal.'[81]

General Murray's defeats in March and April of 1917 meant that the, 'war against Turkey, so recently begun, appeared to have ended'.[82] Allenby was the commander who would replace Murray and take the E.E.F. not only to Jerusalem, but ultimately deep into Syria and Cilicia in his final defeat of the Ottoman armies in Palestine and Syria. After Turkey's surrender Allenby commanded the peacetime army of occupation, and was the High Commissioner for Egypt from 1919-25. Both during, and more especially after the war at the Paris Peace Conference, politicians were negotiating new political structures for the Middle East, and Allenby was caught up in these discussions. As High Commissioner Allenby became entangled in the involved negotiations over Egyptian self-rule, and in 1925 he resigned.

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What follows in this thesis is a threefold analysis. On one level is the military actions of the E.E.F.: the tool which could create wider political, strategic or imperial advantage. Considering that most of the existing literature on the purely military dimension is rather uncritical, some discussion of operations will be useful. The second aspect is strategic and focuses on civil-military relations and how and why the E.E.F.s Palestine campaign could contribute to the Central powers' defeat. With the collapse of Britain's enemies in the autumn of 1918

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[78]Maurice, *art.cit.*, p.19.
[79]Newell, 'Hard Way', *JSS*, pp.369-370.
[80]Edmonds papers, VIII/12, 'Newspaper Cuttings: Palestine and Egypt', review of *Sir Archibald Murray's Despatches (1916-1917)* (1920).
[81]Liddell Hart, *History of the First World War* (1970) p.192.
[82]P.Guinn, *British Strategy and War Aims 1914-1918* (1965) p.223.

there arose the need to maintain the British Empire and her interests in the post-war era. These political-imperial considerations constitute a third level of analysis which examines a set of needs held in abeyance by the war's exigencies, yet ones that come to the fore in the post-war settlements.

It is worth pointing out the slight difference between the above levels of analyses and Allan Millett and Williamson Murray's fourfold distinction in their ground-breaking *Military Effectiveness* volume on the First World War. Millett and Murray identify the political, strategic, operational and tactical levels that characterise military activity.[83] The examination in this thesis groups together the operational and tactical under the one heading military, and adds an imperial dimension to Millet and Murray's political level.

In this thesis the terms 'imperial' and 'political' are used extensively. The definition of imperial will be that of the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1983): 'Of or pertaining to the empire'; while for political: 'Characterised by policy; (of persons) sagacious, prudent, shrewd; (of actions or things) judicious, expedient, skilfully contrived...The science and art of government.'

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[83]Millett & Murray, *Military Effectiveness, Volume 1: The First World War* (1988) p.3.

CHAPTER ONE: CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND A RENEWED PALESTINE OFFENSIVE, JUNE-DECEMBER 1917.

> In 1915 the French fought the battle of Champagne, and in the autumn the Germans took Serbia. In 1916 we fought the battle of the Somme, driving the Germans back 20 miles. In the autumn the Germans took Roumania. In the spring of 1917 we beat the Germans at Arras, and took Vimy, Messines, The Germans thereupon took Riga and Russia. In the autumn we took Passchendaele; the Germans take Italy...it is natural that L.G. should be 'rattled', and he is. (Esher papers, journal, Sir Henry Wilson to Lord Esher, 4 November 1917.)

In his *War Memoirs* David Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, remarked how before General Allenby's departure for Egypt in June 1917:-

> I told him in the presence of Sir William Robertson that he was to ask us for such reinforcements and supplies as he found necessary, and we would do our best to provide them. 'If you do not ask it will be your fault. If you do ask and do not get what you need it will be ours.' I said the Cabinet expected 'Jerusalem before Christmas.'[1]

The Prime Minister's emphatic tone gives the misleading impression that he was in charge of his generals, and that his plans for the Palestine campaign were well thought-out and only needed implementation. This chapter examines civil-military relations in late-1917, one of the three levels of analysis outlined in the Introduction, and will show that in late-1917 there existed serious differences over war strategy. The problem was best illustrated by the difficulties between Lloyd George and General Robertson and highlights the fact that policy-makers could not agree what Allenby's objectives would be. Civil-military relations in late-1917 were tense and problematic, and the differences between Lloyd George and Robertson reflected a lack of focused strategy on the part of Britain, and impeded Allenby in his task out in Palestine.

Chapter Two will examine the same period as this one, but follows the operations in Palestine — the military actions of the E.E.F. outlined in the Introduction. This will bring out the relationship between the politicians and the generals; between strategy and tactics. Civil-military relations will form a central part of Chapters One to Four of this thesis. These chapters will also begin discussing what Britain thought she might obtain from the Palestine campaign for any post-war peace settlement. The imperial considerations that come to the fore with the armistice do not suddenly rise from nothing. For this reason, Chapters One to Five, which analyse the Palestine campaign to October 1918, introduce

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[1]Lloyd George, *War Memoirs* (1938) vol.ii, pp.1089-1090.

the imperial dimension behind military operations. Toward the end of this chapter there is analysis of the planned amphibious assault behind Turkish lines, and also examination of the peace negotiations to bring Turkey out of the war.[2] That neither of these were successful was due, in part, to long-term political-imperial issues which resulted in France opposing a landing at Alexandretta, and the British being half-hearted about finalising a peace deal. France opposed a British landing at Alexandretta because of her concern that any such landing would give Britain post-war advantage in an area that France considered hers. For her part, Britain was not eager to make a premature peace settlement with the Ottoman empire until Allenby's army had secured as much of the Middle East as possible.

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With the coming to power of Lloyd George in December 1916, and his introduction of a leaner War Cabinet, civil-military relations entered a difficult phase. How best to direct the war had been a point of contention under the previous Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, but with Lloyd George as premier differences very much came to a head.[3] There was thus tension between the 'frocks' and the 'brasshats' until the Trans-Jordan raids of spring 1918.[4]

If the aforementioned quotation from Lloyd George's *Memoirs* concerning the capture of Jerusalem is taken uncritically, the conclusion is that Allenby's task was a straight forward one, and one not complicated by any behind-the-scenes difficulties. But the South African general, Jan Smuts, who was offered the command of the E.E.F. over Allenby, turned it down precisely because he knew that the War Office was not fully behind the operation, preferring to keep the focus of attention on the war in France.[5] Because of Allenby's perceived failure with Third Army at the battle of Arras in April 1917 he did not have Smuts' option, and Allenby was angry at being moved from France to Palestine.[6] In his biography Brian Gardner comments that Allenby was 'desolate' at being transferred away from France.[7]

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[2]The site of the assault was usually Alexandretta (now the Turkish town of Iskenderun).
[3]D.Woodward, 'Britain in a Continental War: The Civil-Military Debate Over the Strategical Direction of the Great War of 1914-1918', *Albion*, Spring 1980, pp.37-65, shows how civil-military problems existed under Asquith, but nothing like the differences under Lloyd George.
[4]Terms used by K.Simpson in, 'Frock Coats, Mandarins and Brasshats: The Relationship between Politicians, Civil Servants and the Military', *RUSI Journal*, Feb.1992, pp.57-63.
[5]Gardner, *Allenby* (1965) p.111 and M.Thomson, *David Lloyd George: The Official Biography* (1948) p.272. Smuts' correspondence re the appointment can be found in W.K.Hancock and J.van der Poel, *Selections from the Smuts Papers* (1966) vol.iii, letters 741, 745, 757 & 762. My thanks to Dr M.H.van Meurs for checking the Smuts papers in Pretoria.
[6]Allenby papers, 6/VIII/68, McMahon to Wavell, 18 Oct.1936.
[7]Gardner, *Allenby*, p.113.

The usual description of the difference between Lloyd George and the 'generals' are the over-worked and rather simplistic terms 'easterners' versus 'westerners'. There was a divergence of opinion between those such as Robertson and General Douglas Haig who wanted to concentrate all efforts on the main front in France, and politicians such as Lloyd George who sought victory by reinforcing peripheral war zones. However, simply to heap policy-makers into one or other category is misleading. Those at the centre of power such as Lloyd George and Robertson were astute, and usually able to see the complexities surrounding prosecution of the Great War. Certainly with Robertson, his affected exterior of a man who had risen through the ranks and dropped his aitches, belied an accomplished linguist and a sharp mind.[8] David French captures part of the dilemma writing how all, 'policy-makers were agreed that measures had to be taken to protect the British empire in the East...What they could not agree on was how best to do this.'[9] Robertson was conscious of Britain's imperial requirement to protect the route to India, but he did not think that the war would be won anywhere but France and Belgium. Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham provide an intelligent analysis of Lloyd George's attitude to the value of peripheral campaigns in writing that: 'Lloyd George understood, as far as he could understand any military question, that Germany had to be defeated on the Western Front. What he really wanted was to shift the burden of that task to the shoulders of others; French, or American.'[10] The Prime Minister was aware of the need to preserve British power, as represented by her armed forces, for use during and after the fighting; Robertson felt that his task was to keep war-policy on course and out of the hands of those like Lloyd George. It was not so much 'easterners' and 'westerners', as 'long-term' versus 'short-term' strategists; it was not so much that Lloyd George thought that he could win the war in Palestine, more that he became increasingly convinced that Haig with his costly offensives would lose the war in France. Robertson, likewise, feared that in pursuance of his 'long-term' strategy Lloyd George would lose the war.

General Robertson was conscious of the worrying implications of Russia's collapse for the British empire.[11] Decision-makers in Britain were keenly aware of how the Russian Revolution could permit a Turco-German drive through the Caucasus and Trans-Caspia region and on to India. This worry was compounded by the fear that the Bolsheviks, with their revolutionary ideology,

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[8]Robertson's rise to field-marshal is told in his *From Private to Field Marshal* (1921).
[9]French, *British Strategy and War Aims 1914-16* (1986) p.xii.
[10]D.Graham & S.Bidwell, *Coalitions, Politicians & Generals: Some Aspects of Command in Two World Wars* (1993) p.61.
[11]See for instance Robertson papers, I/17/1, 'Military Effect of Russia Seceding from the Entente', 9 May 1917 and I/17/3, 'The Present Military Situation in Russia and its Effect on our Future Plans', 29 July 1917.

might alter the balance of power in Central Asia after the war in a more profound way. Considering these concerns, Robertson still saw little military value in pursuing campaigns such as the E.E.F.s in Palestine while the fighting raged in France. He saw them as a waste of time and resources, and was content to deal with military moves such as the Central powers' push towards Baku on the Caspian Sea with small specialist British-led military missions.[12]

Lloyd George, who had no military experience,[13] viewed the Palestine campaign as a means of achieving four things: firstly, by fighting in Palestine wasteful British offensives in France were harder to pursue; secondly, he saw in Palestine a means of pursuing his policy of 'knocking away the props', which would ultimately bring defeat to Germany; thirdly, the resolve of the British populace required morale lifting victories to compensate for the casualties in France; fourthly, there was Lloyd George's realisation of the need to provide Britain with territorial bargaining counters for any peace settlement, more especially if Germany's defeat was not unconditional, and she remained a threat. These four factors show that Lloyd George was looking at the Palestine campaign from many different perspectives, and the later chapters of this thesis show the Prime Minister's development and use of Allenby's campaign at the negotiating table. What Lloyd George seemed to ignore were the purely military concerns which dominated the thinking of Robertson, and which were paramount in 1917.[14]

In his autobiography, *From Private to Field Marshal*, Robertson wrote how, 'the advance into Palestine had for its main object the thwarting of hostile designs against Mesopotamia, and not the capture of Jerusalem'.[15] This parochial operational view can be contrasted with a speech given by the Prime Minister to Parliament on 20 December 1917:-

> [The capture of Baghdad and Jerusalem] will have a permanent effect on the history of the world...The British Empire owes a great deal to side-shows. During the Seven Years' War...the events which are best remembered by every Englishman are not the great battles on the continent of Europe, but Plassey and the Heights of Abraham; and I have no doubt at all that, when the history of 1917 comes to be written, and comes to be read ages hence, these events in Mesopotamia and Palestine

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[12]Such as 'Dunsterforce', account in L.Dunsterville, *The Adventures of Dunsterforce* (1920). 'Dunsterforce' went through Persia and to Baku; for Trans-Caspia, Britain sent a force under General Malleson (see D.Fromkin, *A Peace To End All Peace: Creating The Modern Middle East 1914-1922* (1991) pp.360-362).

[13]Discounting Lloyd George's time in the militia 1881-82 (see J.Grigg, *The Young Lloyd George* (1973) p.44.).

[14]Maurice Hankey (*The Supreme Command* (1961) vol.ii, pp.836-852) gives the impression that peripheral operations won the war.

[15]Robertson, pp.306-307.

> will hold a much more conspicuous place in the minds and the memories of people than many an event which looms much larger for the moment in our sight.[16]

Lloyd George and Robertson, while seemingly at odds, were looking at two sides of the same coin; both wanted to defeat Germany, but while Robertson kept his focus confined to operations, pointing out that militarily the result of Jerusalem's capture, 'would be of no value to us', Lloyd George's purview was very much the wider political dimension.[17] These different approaches need not have been, and should not have been, mutually exclusive. The effect of this conflict in London was to hamper Allenby's task as British grand strategy was confused.[18]

Lloyd George's search for alternatives to operations in France was strongly influenced by the fact that it looked in 1917 as if the war might continue into 1919, or even 1920. For the Entente powers, 1917 was very much the year of 'strain' with Russia's collapse, Italy's defeat at the battle of Caporetto, mutinies in the French army following the Nivelle offensive, unrestricted submarine warfare, and no early sign of the arrival of American troops. Lloyd George outlined his worries to Maurice Hankey on 15 October 1917, pointing out that Britain should save herself for, 'the great and terrible effort in 1919'.[19] By the time of this conversation Britain had been fighting for over three years, and the situation was grim. In a letter to Lord Murray in July 1917, Esher wrote how both, 'in England and France, men are old and weary. Even those young in years are too travelled-stained to make any show'.[20] The war seemed interminable, and if 1917, 'managed to be worse than 1916 on most counts', the natural fear was, what would 1918 bring?[21] The spring and summer of 1917 saw industrial disputes in Britain, and this, coupled with the rise of the Bolsheviks in Russia, made the

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[16]Guinn, *British Strategy and Politics 1914-1918* (1965) ft p.283 (from *Hansard*, col.2211, 20 Dec.1917 where Lloyd George expands on the value of the Palestine campaign).

[17]Robertson papers, I/16/7/2c, 'Future Military Policy', 9 Oct.1917.

[18]There was much in Robertson the Prime Minister respected, but this did not stop the disagreement over war policy (see Liddell Hart, *Through The Fog Of War* (1938) p.114).

[19]Hankey papers, 8/2, 15 Oct.1917, 'Note by Maurice Hankey of a Conversation between the Prime Minister and Himself', p.8 (copy also in CAB1/42). The WC on 30 Oct.1917 (meeting 259A) discussed whether to make the main allied effort in 1918 or 1919. Wilson ('Memorandum by CIGS on possibility of war continuing to 1919', 19 Mar.1918) was emphatic (p 2) that war would go on into 1919 (CAB25/73).

[20]Esher papers, journal 2/20, letter to Lord Murray, 28 July 1917.

[21]J.Turner, *British Politics and the Great War* (1992) p.6. F.Maurice, 'The Campaigns in Palestine and Egypt 1914-18 in relation to the General Strategy of the War', *The Army Quarterly*, April-July 1929, p.22 describes how Lloyd George wanted Palestine as a bargaining counter in a war which would go on until 1919.

British establishment particularly alarmed by the threat of nascent revolutionary movements.[22]

In this context the planning of British war strategy was crucial. With the capture of Messines Ridge in June 1917, the stage was set for Haig's offensive towards Passchendaele (the third battle of Ypres). Lloyd George was very bitter about the casualties incurred at third Ypres, and the Prime Minister's anger was reflected in his relationship with the C.I.G.S. The Prime Minister felt that Robertson blindly backed Haig. In a conversation in 1932 with the military thinker Basil Liddell Hart, Lloyd George remembered how, 'Robertson never attempted to guide [the] strategy of war. Merely backed Haig and would have backed a successor similarly.' Lloyd George added with some obvious bitterness that Haig was, 'utterly stupid', and: 'That was the man we made an earl. And I gave £100,000 to.'[23] There is some substance in the idea that Robertson did agree with Haig, but a more accurate assessment would be that, 'Robertson apparently believed that he had no choice but to support Haig. If he did not, he feared that the civilians would exploit the disunity within the high command to redirect higher strategy.'[24] That Robertson did not agree with Lloyd George's scheme of pushing a Palestine campaign did not mean, *ipso facto*, that the C.I.G.S. had no strategy of his own, or that this strategy was wrong.

General Robertson's own admission to Haig in September 1917 was: 'My views are known to you. They have always been "defensive" in all theatres but the West...I confess I stick to it more because I see nothing better.'[25] Thirteen days before the fall of Jerusalem to Allenby's 60th London Division Robertson was still maintaining that, 'operations in Palestine have not much to do with the winning of the war'.[26] Lloyd George's enthusiasm for Allenby to push on stood in marked contrast to the pessimism of the C.I.G.S. who wrote to Haig how Lloyd George, 'is also very keen on capturing Jerusalem and this of course I...had to fight and I intend continuing to do so...But it is very disturbing all the same to have these hankerings after other plans and mistrust in present ones.' Robertson added in the same letter to Haig: 'You will probably think I might I have said more about the necessity of getting every available man on the West front from

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[22]Turner, *British Politics*, pp.5-7 and Guinn, *British Strategy*, pp.235, 242. Balfour papers, Add.Mss.49719, Esher to CIGS, 20 June 1917 for threat of revolution in Britain.

[23]Liddell Hart papers, II/1932/42, 'Talk with Lloyd George—Generals in WW1', 24 Sept.1932.

[24]Woodward (ed), *The Military Correspondence of Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson* (1989) p.194.

[25]Robertson papers, I/23/54c, Robertson to Haig, 27 Sept.1917. See also L.S.Amery, *My Political Life* (1953) vol.ii, p 82. '"Wully" had no other conception of strategy than to back up Haig', adding that Robertson obstructed all 'sideshows'.

[26]Two 'cockney' privates took the surrender (Shea papers, folder 4/5); quote from Robertson papers, I/36/58, Robertson to Maxwell, 26 Nov.1917.

the outside theatres but I have said that ad nauseam and they just will not read or listen to it'.[27]

Germany's defeat in November 1918 — and the collapse of her three allies in the preceding six weeks — would seem to vindicate Robertson as Turkey's surrender followed on from Germany's collapse. As Franz von Papen, the future German chancellor who served in Palestine as a staff officer with the Turkish Fourth Army, put it in his *Memoirs*: 'In spite of the collapse of the desert front [in December 1917] we managed to hold down Allenby's armies in Palestine until September 1918, when the outcome of the war was being decided not in the Middle East but on the Western Front.'[28]

The defeat of the Central powers was, however, far from apparent in 1917, and Lloyd George's desire to pursue alternative strategies, and provide morale boosters for the home front, should be viewed in this context. The military theorist Liddell Hart felt that Lloyd George was the better strategist, but that Lloyd George was, 'handicapped by his own lack of knowledge of the mechanism of war'.[29] Leopold Amery and Lord Milner matched Liddell Hart's assessment and were both closely involved with the War Cabinet.[30] Milner and Amery were, however, politicians, not trained in planning military operations, and Lloyd George's lack of knowledge on 'the mechanisms of war' was a substantial omission. The evidence from the first three chapters of this thesis supports Robertson's pessimism on the contribution that the Palestine campaign could make toward winning the war, and shows that Allenby's campaign had an adverse impact on operations in France. There were good reasons for Lloyd George wanting to push on in Palestine, but this did not mean that Robertson's assessments were incorrect.

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Maurice Hankey recorded that as Allenby sailed for Egypt the, 'prolonged controversy between the "eastern" and "western" schools of thought which began with the Gallipoli campaign...reached its point of greatest intensity.'[31] These differences of opinion have a bearing on Allenby's command as he prepared for the third battle of Gaza. Firstly, there is the question of whether the civil-military

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[27]Robertson papers, I/23/40b, Robertson to Haig, 21 July 1917. Woodward, 'Britain's "Brass-hats" and the Question of a Compromise Peace 1916-18', *Military Affairs*, 1971, p.67, points to the new low in civil-military relations by late-1917.

[28]Von Papen, *Memoirs* (1952) p.76.

[29]See for instance Liddell Hart papers, correspondence, 1/733, Liddell Hart to Wavell, 20 Mar.1934 and *Ibid.*, Liddell Hart to Wavell, 27 Mar.1934.

[30]Amery, *My Political Life*, vol.ii, p.96. Milner papers, V/A/355, Milner to Lloyd George, 20 Mar.1917.

[31]Hankey, *Supreme Command*, vol.ii, p.670.

dispute on strategy meant that Robertson influenced Allenby to deliberately mislead the War Cabinet in London over the numbers of troops required to advance into Palestine and Syria. If the military were deceitful the implication of this was that Lloyd George's pursuance of a Palestine campaign was maliciously thwarted. The second issue is whether there was a general lack of a co-ordinated and agreed policy in London. If this were so, then the fact that war strategy was in turmoil further obfuscated Allenby's mission.

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General Murray had been compliant in using Egypt as a transit and resting point for troops coming from India, Australia and New Zealand whose ultimate destination was France. This was a policy that Robertson favoured. Lloyd George wanted to turn this situation around, and use an offensive in Palestine as a counter to what he saw as the drain on men in the battles in France. Allenby was caught in the middle of an increasingly acrimonious struggle between Lloyd George and Robertson, and one which culminated in the C.I.G.S.s resignation in February 1918.

The most egregious example of Robertson's supposedly disingenuous approach to the Palestine campaign — and by implication giving force to the idea that more could have been achieved if Robertson and the General Staff had been more honest — was in relation to Allenby's request for an additional thirteen divisions for the E.E.F. Described by David Woodward as, 'one of the most absurd appreciations ever presented to a British government', the request came in an assessment Allenby made to Robertson on 9 October 1917, which Robertson passed on to the War Cabinet the following day.[32] In his October report Allenby pointed out that he would:-

> require 20 divisions in order to drive back enemy of this strength [Allenby's assessment of the force to oppose him was twenty divisions including two German] and to capture Jerusalem-Jaffa line...My total strength therefore should be 14 divisions and three Cavalry Divisions for employment on my front, and six more divisions to be concentrated on Canal for purpose of replacing worn out divisions...Thus my additional requirement in troops would be 13 divisions.[33]

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[32]Woodward, *Lloyd George and the Generals* (1983) p.206 & quoted in T.Wilson, *The Myriad Faces of War* (1986) p.500. For Allenby's report see Milner papers, V/B/360, W.P.52, Robertson to Secretary War Cabinet, 10 Oct. 1917 enclosing GOC-in-C GHQ Egypt to CIGS War Office, 9 Oct.1917.

[33]*Ibid.* (Milner papers).

Allenby already had ten divisions so he was requesting a total force of twenty-three divisions, numbering some 500,000 men: an impracticable request. Considering that Allenby went on in November-December 1917 to capture and hold Jerusalem with ten divisions, one sees the incongruity of his assessment. Certainly the War Cabinet in December 1917 was not slow to point out to Robertson the curious nature of Allenby's October request.[34]

David Woodward describes Robertson's actions as 'cooking' the figures to force Lloyd George to act cautiously, and that Robertson did so by sending Allenby a secret 'R' telegram to get him to make this inflated estimate of twenty-three divisions. But the evidence for military complicity seems less convincing. Robertson's request to Allenby for his troop requirements and planned strategy was straight forward.[35] To see a conspiracy in Robertson's correspondence with Allenby is to transform reasoned reports into something sinister. To say that Allenby 'got the not so subtle hint' from Robertson is to see a conspiracy where there was not one.[36] If it were a 'plot' why, on 9 October, did Robertson assess Allenby's divisional requirements as an extra five divisions, leaving Allenby's more inflated estimate of the same day looking forlorn?[37] Robertson, in *Soldiers and Statesmen*, wrote that:-

> Moreover, Allenby and I had been fellow students at the Staff College some twenty years before, and subsequently had been brought together at manoeuvres and on many other occasions. There was a complete understanding between us, and not the least probability that he would read into the telegram [one of Robertson's "R" telegrams that Woodward makes much of] more than it was intended to convey.[38]

Basil Liddell Hart concurs with the view that Robertson was simply reacting to Allenby.[39] Robertson, of course, needed little prompting to do this, as Allenby's divisional assessment supported his own view that a Palestine offensive was problematic, but this did not mean that Robertson was acting in bad faith. The fairest conclusion is that Allenby genuinely misread Turkish capabilities and intentions. It should be borne in mind that Allenby had supposedly failed at the

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[34]See for instance Robertson defending the military to the War Cabinet in WO106/727, CIGS to War Cabinet, 14 Dec.1917 (also Cabinet minutes in CAB23/4/296(5), 12 Dec.1917). Robertson also brings up the subject of the Cabinet's annoyance in Robertson, *Soldiers and Statesmen* (1926) vol.ii, p.184.

[35]Woodward, *Lloyd George and the Generals* (1983) pp.206, 231.

[36]Woodward, *Lloyd George*, p 206.

[37]Robertson papers, I/16/7/2m, 'Occupation of Jaffa-Jerusalem Line', 9 Oct.1917. Robertson's letter to Hankey accompanying his report (I/16/7/1) gives the impression Robertson had little notice of Allenby's coming assessment (see also *S & S*, vol.ii, p.184).

[38]Robertson, *S & S*, vol.ii, p.182 & Woodward, *LG & Generals*, p.206.

[39]Liddell Hart, *The War in Outline* (n d) p.192.

battle of Arras, and he could not sustain another defeat and keep command. The two defeats at Gaza in the spring of 1917 had been sobering experiences, and the situation in late-1917 in Palestine was such that Allenby was loath to act hastily. In the next chapter, which examines the events surrounding the third battle of Gaza, British intelligence *vis-à-vis* the Turks is shown to be faulty as the Turks' offensive capabilities in Palestine were far less than the British imagined. This was the main reason that Allenby gave the inflated request for thirteen extra divisions. Allenby was worried about Turkish reinforcements in a force called *Yilderim* being sent to Palestine which, it was believed, were being stiffened with German infantry divisions. These worries, compounded by the uncertainty of capturing the wells of Beersheba intact at the third battle of Gaza, were the priorities that influenced Allenby's reports. To emphasise Allenby's twenty-three division request is to ignore that commanders of armies usually ask for more than is absolutely necessary. Allenby was not unique in trying to get as many men as possible to deal with the vagaries of war.

That section of Liddell Hart's papers dealing with strategy in late-1917 does show the General Staff in a poor light. Amery, talking to Liddell Hart in 1928, put it emphatically:-

> Gen. Staff under Robertson and Maurice used to 'cook' facts and pile up difficulties to show that sideshows were no good. G.S. estimate was that Allenby would need 18 divisions to gain Jerusalem. 4½ proved sufficient. Then G.S. said (end of 1917) that 20 divisions would be necessary for Allenby to gain Damascus. When pointed out to Maurice about the Jerusalem estimate, Maurice replied that 'it oughtn't to have been reached' — only because of the fluke that 'water was found when not expected'. Maurice unscrupulous in controversy or in argument.[40]

Lloyd George agreed with Amery's assessment: 'L.G. remarked that he had never known politicians tell a deliberate lie. "They colour, exaggerate, but they avoid a lie because of the heavy risk of being tripped up". G.[eneral] S.[taff] told L.G. *palpable lies*.'[41] Whether true or not Lloyd George seemed to believe this and thus did not rely on Robertson's assessments. Lloyd George's conviction that he was not being told the truth led him to disregard the advice given to him by his military experts concerning the Palestine campaign. This was a serious matter as Lloyd George was doing away with the military advice which was essential for a united British war-effort. This state of affairs was remarked on by Robertson after the war when he commented on, 'the strategical adventures of those

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[40]Liddell Hart papers, II/1928 18, 'Talk with Leo Amery on side-shows and political control in WW1; also armistice', 1 Nov.1928.

[41]Liddell Hart papers, II/1932/42, 'Talk with Lloyd George—Generals in WW1, LH's impressions of LG', 24 Sept.1932 (my emphasis).

Ministers who thought they knew as much about military business as those who had been trained in it'.[42] Amery and Lloyd George were being overly suspicious of Robertson and the General Staff, but this was their perception at the time and was what influenced their decisions.

The debate over whether Robertson, Allenby and the General Staff acted in bad faith is something of a distraction. The problem with the Palestine campaign in late-1917 was more fundamental. Grand strategy was in turmoil in late-1917, and in a comparison to Winston Churchill and the Second World War, Malcolm Thomson gets some way towards the truth: 'Lloyd George never possessed such authority [as Churchill]; and in consequence the year 1917 was a period of frustration for him as regards its military operations'.[43] Bidwell and Graham support this stressing how, 'the powers of field commanders to make policy were markedly less in the Second [World War] than in the First...Churchill did not have to struggle to establish [his] authority.'[44] Lloyd George did not possess the power to direct matters as he might have wished, as Amery observed: 'In the last resort he did not know enough to be sure of himself. He could wring his hands over the slaughter at Passchendaele and rail against Robertson and Haig. But he could not trust his judgement to the point of dismissing them or even over-riding them'.[45] This comment of Amery's overlooks that Lloyd George would have liked to have dismissed both Haig and Robertson, but he did not have the power to do so. In the end all that Lloyd George achieved was Robertson's resignation in February 1918.

Lloyd George's attempt to wrest control of the war meant that time and energy that could have been more fruitfully applied to fighting the war were being spent on an attempt to change policy. This civil-military battle runs through the first part of this thesis, and is only resolved when Lloyd George used the Supreme War Council to force through a renewed Palestine offensive in February 1918. The Prime Minister coupled this with Robertson's dismissal, only to find that the German Ludendorff offensives made a renewed Palestine campaign impossible. Unified war strategy was difficult while the Prime Minister was, 'driven to work for Robertson's resignation instead of overruling him directly'.[46] Britain was in an unenviable position with her war leader disregarding the professional military advice given to him because he believed it to be suspect.

As to Allenby's complicity in any military 'plot' to deceive Lloyd George, the evidence indicates that Allenby was honest in his dealings. Challenging this

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[42]Barrow papers, 67/157/1, Robertson to Barrow, 16 May 1927.
[43]Thomson, *DLG*, p.270.
[44]Bidwell & Graham, *Coalitions, Politicians & Generals*, p.4.
[45]Amery, *My Political Life*, vol.ii, p.96.
[46]Liddell Hart papers, II/1928/18, 'Talk with Leo Amery on side-shows and political control in WW1; also armistice', 1 Nov.1928.

conclusion is information from historical documents on events after the fall of Jerusalem. The first difficulty arises with the fact that after Jerusalem's fall, when Allenby was far more aware of the Turks' weaknesses, he still carried on sending reports similar to the one of 9 October 1917; the second problem arises from post-war remarks made by Colonel Walter Kirke who went to Palestine with the Smuts mission in 1918.

On 20 December 1917 Allenby cabled that he would, 'require 16 or 18 divisions besides my mounted corps to ensure success against Damascus-Beirut line if strongly held.'[47] Since Allenby went on to capture Damascus and the whole of Syria with his existing force, it can be seen how awry was his estimate.[48] His success was also achieved largely with newly trained Indian troops who had been sent to Palestine in 1918 to replace the trained troops sent to France from March 1918 following the Ludendorff offensives.

However, Allenby was, in the main, misreading the Turks, and analysis in Chapter Two shows consistent exaggeration of Turco-German capabilities and intentions. Thus, Allenby was not being malicious in sending the reports he did. When Allenby did conquer Syria in October 1918 he was facing an enemy much weaker than in 1917. The Turks surrendered in October 1918 because Bulgaria, Austria-Hungary and Germany were defeated. In late-1917 Turkey's allies were still very much in the war and able to supply the Ottoman armed forces, and it was this situation which influenced Allenby's divisional requirements.

Contradicting this benign view of Allenby are remarks made by Colonel Kirke who accompanied Smuts' mission in February 1918 as Robertson's liaison officer — or as Amery described it Kirke was there, 'mainly for the purpose of crabbing the whole idea of an advance in Palestine'.[49] This mission was one of Lloyd George's means of pushing for renewed action in Palestine and its activities will be examined in Chapter Three. After the war Kirke twice remarked on his role within the mission with unfavourable implications towards Allenby. Writing to Wavell in 1939 Kirke remembered that:-

> My feeling is that it may not be fair to father any part of such a rotten plan [a reference to Smuts' proposals for Palestine that will be dealt with in Chapter Three] on to Allenby, because when the original wire was sent off, he was playing the game according to the instructions received

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[47]Milner papers, III/B/140, GT3112, 'Future Operations in Palestine', by CIGS, 26 Dec.1917 enclosing in appendix iv, Allenby to CIGS, 20 Dec.1917 with request for additional divisions (copies also in CAB24/37/GT3112 appendix iv and Robertson papers I/16/9). Also see Allenby papers, 6/VIII/3, notes by Wavell '1917'.

[48]Amery in a note entitled 'Future Operations in Palestine', 30 Dec.1917, was critical of the pessimism in Robertson's memo of 26 Dec. and Amery expounds the 'easterner' line (Lloyd George papers, F/2/1/10 and CAB25/41).

[49]Allenby papers, 6/IX/5, Amery to Wavell, 27 Mar.1939.

> from the C.I.G.S. that no operations were to be undertaken. Later on, after the news of Robertson's resignation reached us [18 February while the mission was still in Egypt], he no doubt took a more active part and from this the wider developments which you mention [possible reference to Trans-Jordan raids] may have started.[50]

Walter Kirke repeated this accusation in an autobiographical sketch in his papers where he pointed out that his instructions from Robertson, 'were to do everything possible to prevent him [Smuts] making any plans, which would keep troops in Palestine', adding that he, 'had written instructions to Allenby to the same effect, with which the latter most punctiliously complied, though of course he would have liked nothing better than to attack'.[51] If correct, Kirke's evidence is more damning, and supports the Liddell Hart-Woodward line that the military were acting in bad faith.

The problem with Kirke's accusations is that their significance is largely academic. Allenby, for his own reasons, was wary, and adopted the poorer plan for the third battle of Gaza, making striking success unlikely. The evidence surrounding the third battle of Gaza shows Allenby as a necessarily methodical commander. He had good reasons for acting this way, and while neither the machinations in London, nor the confused state of British war strategy as a whole, did much to help him, Allenby did his best and got on with planning the capture of Jerusalem. Allenby made his divisional estimates assuming that he would have to occupy and garrison Palestine, Syria and Lebanon against an enemy still able to threaten his expeditionary force.

The charge that Robertson was deliberately lying was a most serious one, and Lord Derby (the Secretary of State for War) writing to Lloyd George, felt the accusation 'almost beyond belief' as Robertson was essentially 'honest'.[52] Arthur Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, was closest to the truth when he wrote to Andrew Bonar Law that as the military were not behind the Palestine campaign little would happen. This was not to say that they acted in a deceitful fashion, more that they were lack-lustre in their attitude to a renewed eastern offensive.[53]

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When Mark Sykes (a Middle East adviser and intermittent member of the War Cabinet secretariat) returned to London in mid-September 1917 the War Cabinet,

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[50]Allenby papers, 6/IX-X/31, Kirke to Wavell, 1 Mar 1939.
[51]Kirke papers, vol.vii, 'Resume of Kirke's Career', p.6. On p.6 Kirke added that when Wilson became CIGS Allenby hoped to be able to do more, but Wilson followed Robertson's line.
[52]Lloyd George papers, F/14 4/83, Derby to PM, 11 Dec.1917.
[53]Balfour papers, Add.Mss.49693, Balfour to Bonar Law, 10 Sept.1917.

'still had not agreed on how far Allenby should go in Palestine'.[54] At the eighteenth meeting of the Cabinet Committee on War Policy on 3 October 1917 Smuts pointed out that current instructions to Allenby, 'did not mean the conquest of Palestine which indicated that we had not settled a policy at present for knocking out the Turks.'[55] As Allenby was to launch the third battle of Gaza by assaulting Beersheba on 30 October, it is difficult to locate his impending assault within a coherent central strategic framework.

Neither can strategic clarity be found in the international conferences Britain held with France. The two conferences of 25-26 July and 7-8 August succeeded in allowing one division — the 10th Irish — to be moved from Salonika to Egypt.[56] Yet this was a hard-won victory for Lloyd George, and not until the London conference in August 1917 was it finally agreed to move the division. The aimless nature of these conferences struck Hankey who wrote in his diary how the, 'whole morning was spent in discussing and wrangling over a ridiculous question of moving one division from Salonika to Egypt', the whole affair being 'very futile'.[57]

With peace in October 1918, Anglo-French friction over the spoils of war in the eastern Mediterranean came to the fore. These difficulties will be illustrated as this thesis progresses. At this stage one sees how the complications of alliance warfare adversely affected war-policy. Anglo-French co-operation and co-ordination between their expeditionary forces at Salonika and Palestine was sorely lacking. The Entente's expeditionary force at Salonika was not used in conjunction with Allenby's force to threaten the Central powers on two fronts, instead the two armies acted independently of each other. The main reason for this was political, as Britain had no intention of allowing France a role of any importance in Palestine in military terms, knowing that France would use her assistance to give leverage at any post-war peace talks. France, likewise, had non-military reasons for wanting to keep a force at Salonika, and she also did not want Britain to land at Alexandretta, behind the Turkish lines, as she considered this area to be in her zone of interest. The Zionist, Chaim Weizmann, in June 1917, told W. Ormsby Gore that, 'the French policy in Greece was partly dictated by the desire to prevent our reinforcing the Palestinian front so as to prevent Britain gaining a footing in Palestine'.[58] Weizmann's assessment seems correct as

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[54]M.Adelson, *Mark Sykes: Portrait of an Amateur* (1975) p.241.

[55]18th meeting of the Cabinet Committee on War Policy, 3 October 1917, p.2 (copies in Curzon papers, Mss Eur F112/136 and CAB27 6).

[56]Minutes of the proceedings in Curzon papers (Allied Conference IC series), Mss Eur F112/152 (copies also in CAB28/2). See Hankey, *Supreme Command*, vol.ii, pp.689-690 for August conference.

[57]Hankey papers, diaries, 1 3 vol.2, 25-26 July 1917.

[58]Sykes papers, DDSY(2)/12/8, report by Gore, 10 June 1917, p 3.

France preferred for the British troops to remain at Salonika where they did little and suffered badly from malaria.[59] One is reminded of the aphorism that, 'the only thing worse than fighting in an alliance is not fighting in an alliance'.

The problems of alliance warfare served to exacerbate the already fraught situation in London between Lloyd George and Robertson. The Cabinet Committee on War Policy was one of the many committees spawned by the War Cabinet. The twenty-one meetings held by the committee in 1917 illustrate many of the damaging effects of the civil-military dispute on war strategy.[60] Reading the minutes is to discover a depressing catalogue of prevarication and indecision: 'a talking shop, seldom sticking to its agenda and almost never reaching positive conclusions which could be passed by the secretariat to the appropriate department for action'.[61] The final meeting on 11 October 1917 (possibly misdated and held on the 9th[62]), witnessed Milner replying to advice given by Maj.-Gen. A. Lynden-Bell (Murray's ex-Chief of General Staff) in the previous meeting. Lynden-Bell was seen as Robertson's representative, and the following — by no means isolated — quote captures some of the spirit of civil-military relations:-

> LORD MILNER said he was quite undiscouraged by General Lynden Bell's evidence [against attacking Turkey]. If Sir Douglas Haig had approached his problem in the same spirit, he could have made an even stronger case against doing no more. His feeling was that General Lynden-Bell had wanted to make a case...In fact, the military made no proposals. They waited for the War Cabinet to make proposals, and then they overthrew them. His own feeling was that no one was trying in this matter.[63]

In the same meeting Lloyd George supported Milner's assessment saying how: 'Lynden-Bell when asked if the whole resources of the British Empire were put at his disposal could he smash the Turks, he had replied in the negative.'[64]

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[59]For the malaria casualties at Salonika see L.J.Bruce-Chwatt & J.de Zulueta, *The Rise and Fall of Malaria in Europe: A historico-epidemiological study* (1980) p.140.

[60]Of the 21 meetings numbers 15, 16, 18, 19, 20 & 21 dealt with Palestine. Various WP papers and reports were produced by the committee and copies can be found in CAB27/7-8 (also in Curzon papers, Mss Eur F112/135-136 and Milner papers V/B/360). There are no minutes for the 19th meeting as Hankey apparently had a cold (see S.Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets* (1970) vol.i, p.440) although Robertson gives his side of what happened in WO106/721.

[61]Bidwell & Graham, *Coalitions, Politicians & Generals*, p.87.

[62]Woodward, *LG and the Generals* (ft.p.218) & *Military Correspondence of Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson* (ft.p.324). It is not clear how Woodward knows that the date is wrong although it is probably from Hankey's diaries (from author's correspondence with editor of the *Journal of Military History*, 29 May 1995).

[63]CAB27/6, 21st meeting of CCWP, 11 Oct.1917, p.4.

[64]*Ibid.*

These deliberations were not conclusive, and the debate over whether to attack Turkey through Palestine carried on into 1918.

In an attempt to give himself military credibility, Lloyd George used Lord French (ex-commander of the B.E.F.), to prepare a report that was submitted on 20 October 1917.[65] Henry Wilson also helped with this report which was critical of first Haig, and then Robertson. In French's report Robertson's negative attitude to the Palestine campaign received the retort:-

> The C.I.G.S. further draws attention to the danger of 'gambles' at this stage of the war, and he characterises as such the suggested operation in Syria. To my mind the idea of staking the remainder of our resources on one desperate blow after another on the Western Front has become much more of a 'gamble' than anything else we have undertaken in this war. This method has been given a very long and patient trial under the most favourable conditions.[66]

Lord French continued by arguing that a Palestine offensive, 'offered such favourable chances and possibilities as should have induced the General Staff to bring it up for discussion by the War Cabinet at a time when it would have been possible to consider it'.[67] This is significant, as what French saw as a feasible military operation, was now impossible due to the lateness of any attack. This, said French, meant that the possibility that the spring of 1918 would have seen Turkey out of the war, would now not be realised. As French observed: 'it would be impossible to look for any decisive action by an Army operating in that theatre [Syria] before the winter of 1918.'[68]

If French is correct, the military had succeeded in their task of keeping the focus of operations in France. The idea that the military command was unable to see and act on Lloyd George's strategical insight is reinforced. However, closer examination shows that Lloyd George's plans were seriously flawed. Robertson, and the General Staff, were perfectly correct, as military experts, to be sceptical about the Palestine offensive. The Turks were becoming increasingly less interested in Palestine, preferring to pursue expansionist aims in the Caucasus. The Turks looked to link up with fellow 'Turanian' speakers in Asia, and the loss to them of parts of Syria and Palestine would have been bearable.[69] More than this, how would the occupation of, say, Damascus defeat Turkey? The one

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[65]CAB27/8, WP60, 'The Present State of the War, the Future Prospects, and Future Action to be taken. Memorandum prepared by Lord French in accordance with the request of the War Cabinet (WC247b, conclusion 7).' See also CAB23/13/247(a), 10 Oct.1917, pp.2-3 & 255(a), 23 Oct.1917, pp.5-6 for WC views.

[66]CAB27/8, report by French, p 16.

[67]*Ibid.*

[68]*Ibid.*, p.23.

[69]For an explanation of 'Turanian' see E.Kedourie, *Politics in the Middle East* (1992) p.286.

operation that could have removed the Ottoman empire from the war was the assault at Gallipoli in 1915. Short of Allenby marching his army across the Anatolian heartland and threatening Istanbul, Turkey was going to stay in the war.

There was, of course, the considerable propaganda value for Britain of successes in Palestine. But this must be offset by the fact that cities beyond Jerusalem such as Beirut, Damascus, Homs, Hama or Aleppo had none of the religious significance of Jerusalem. Indeed, most ordinary British people would not have known of these places. Jerusalem was a different matter in an era where people had a far more detailed grasp of the Bible, and Allenby's capture of Jerusalem was very much portrayed as a reversal of the defeats of the Christians during the Crusades. Once beyond Jerusalem there were no obvious symbolic objectives, and this rather supports Robertson's view that there was little profit to be had from the Palestine campaign being pursued beyond Jerusalem.

The fairest conclusion would be that both Robertson and Lloyd George were 'right', but that they had different conceptions of the war. The C.I.G.S. saw the military dimension and the need to fight the 'amateurs', as represented by those like the Prime Minister. This stood in contrast to Lloyd George and his far wider political brief to deal with the morale of the home front; to give Britain something to bargain with after the war to help keep her empire intact; to maintain his own coalition government; and more generally to see matters in a way many of the military experts were unable to because of the more specific nature of their work.[70]

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Militarily, the scheme to use the Entente's naval superiority to outflank the Turkish defences by landing behind their lines, was the wisest policy, and made use of the Entente's naval superiority. The site most discussed for a landing was the bay on which the town of Alexandretta stood.[71] The main advantage of this area was its proximity to the Turkish railway which supplied the Middle East fronts. This line, that fed both the Palestinian and Mesopotamian fronts, branched at Muslimie junction near Alexandretta. Indeed, by simply pushing up to the stretch of line between the Taurus and Amanus mountains the Turks' logistical train could be interdicted before Muslimie junction. This may not have forced

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[70]As B.Busch described it: 'The soldiers looked at maps of France; the amateurs looked at maps of the world.' (From *Britain, India and the Arabs* (1971) p 115.)

[71]Newell, *Ph.D. thesis* (1990) 'British Military Policy in Egypt and Palestine, August 1914-June 1917' deals with the pre-June 1917 schemes for amphibious assault. See also E.Tauber, 'Alexandretta: Three Plans Blocked', *Army Quarterly & Defence Journal*, July 1992, pp.294-300.

Turkey out of the war, but it stood more of a chance of seriously de-stabilising the Ottoman empire than the gradual advance on which Allenby was embarking.

The difficulty with the Alexandretta scheme was that it much talked about, but had little or no chance of being implemented. By 10 August 1917 the War Policy Committee had concluded that the Alexandretta scheme, 'could not be adopted.'[72] The French lacked the necessary tonnage to mount their own operation, and she did not want Britain to establish a foothold in a region she perceived as being her own.[73] French objections only served to reinforce the opinions of those like Robertson who had no enthusiasm for the project, seeing it as 'quite impracticable'.[74] The Admiralty was equally sceptical of the scheme, and the First Sea Lord, Admiral Jellicoe, indicated that the French were also half-hearted, pointing out that the, 'difficulties connected with the initial landing, in the face of certain and experienced opposition, are no doubt fully appreciated by the French General Staff. The composition of the force [a French force] seems to indicate that no really serious operation is contemplated.'[75]

General Robertson was quick to point out that the last troops to land would be arriving as the first were going back to France as they would be needed in the spring of 1918 in Flanders.[76] The failure of the amphibious Gallipoli assault in 1915-16 was also a crucial factor in working against any renewed amphibious operation, as B.C. Busch observed: 'One failure was enough and qualified "westerners" like Asquith saw that while Gallipoli had had some promise it was the only eastern scheme which did'.[77] The defeat at Gallipoli was decisive in implanting in the British army a, 'morbid fear of amphibious assaults on a coast defended by a resolute enemy'.[78] Any remote chance of a landing behind Turkish lines was to depend on Allenby's land offensive, and was thus held off by the gradual nature of the E.E.F.s advance. On 10 October 1917 Hankey recorded in his diary that in the War Cabinet the, 'proposal is for the French to throw in a force on the coast to attack the Turkish communications, but

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[72]Curzon papers, Mss Eur F112/136, WP46, 'Cabinet Committee on War Policy Interim Report', 10 Aug.1917, p.39.

[73]See 15th meeting of CCWP, 6 July 1917, pp.4-6 and 16th meeting of CCWP, 18 July 1917, pp.3-4 (in Curzon papers, Mss Eur F112/136).

[74] Curzon papers, Mss Eur F112/120, letters to Curzon N-W 1917, 6 July 1917. Copy of same letter in Robertson papers I/36/20a-c. See also Inter-Allied Conference of 7-8 Aug.1917 (in Curzon papers, Mss Eur F112/152) p.3 for French reliance on British shipping. Chetwode points out (Chetwode papers, PP/MCR/C1, folder 7, 'Notes on Palestine Campaign', 15 Feb.1918, p.3) that the General Staff were against a landing

[75]Milner papers, V/B/360, Jellicoe to CIGS, 12 Oct 1917 (copy also in Curzon papers, Mss Eur F112/158).

[76]Robertson, *S & S*, vol ii, p.176.

[77]Busch, *Britain, India and the Arabs*, p 116.

[78]Bidwell & Graham, *Coalitions, Politicians & Generals*, p.72.

it is only to eventuate in the case of the British having defeated the Turks and drawn in all their reserves'.[79]

Considering that the Turkish coastal defences were minimal, and that intelligence showed that there would be little opposition, the shelving of the amphibious assault was unfortunate.[80] It would seem that by late-1917 there was only the Ottoman 23rd Division to defend the long Levant coast.[81] The Ottoman war machine by late-1917 was weak, but the political and military factors militating against a landing were too strong. In May 1919, Lloyd George when negotiating with Georges Clemenceau (the French Prime Minister), manipulated the proposal to land at Alexandretta, saying to Clemenceau that Britain had refrained, 'from landing at Alexandretta, because it was pointed out to us that this port was in the French zone. A plan for a landing at Tripoli [in Lebanon] was also set aside for the same reason.'[82] In saying this Lloyd George was purposely omitting that Britain for military reasons, and France for political reasons, had both been opposed to an amphibious attack behind Turkish lines.

The shelving of a sea-borne assault meant that the focus was again on Allenby as it was to be his expeditionary force that would make any advance. In discussing the Alexandretta landing one is made aware of the importance of non-military factors in determining whether an operation would be launched, as French opposition to any landing was decisive in killing off the many schemes put forward. The debate on an amphibious landing reinforces the Robertson line that little gain was to be had by an operation in Palestine. In purely military terms it is hard not to agree with the C.I.G.S., who had a keen sense of what was workable militarily. This ignores considerations such as home front morale, the need to maintain the prestige of the coalition government, and Lloyd George's desire to look for alternatives to the high casualties in Flanders.[83] The crux of the debate is weighing up the immediate military crisis with the political and imperial benefits which could be had by occupying Palestine and Syria. The view of this author is that the balance lies with Robertson.

The attempt to negotiate a peace with Turkey again illustrates the relationship between the Palestine campaign and wider British political needs. Any peace moves were almost bound to fail as Lloyd George was awaiting military victory by the force in Palestine. Until December 1917 Britain only

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[79]Hankey papers, diaries, 10 Oct.1917.

[80]A.Engle, *The Nili Spies* (1959) p.69 for lack of Ottoman resistance.

[81]WO95/4510, Turkish order of battle 1914-18 (a chart), ft.10.

[82]A.S.Link (ed), *The Deliberations of the Council of Four (March 24-June 28 1919) vol.ii, Notes of Official Interpreter Paul Mantoux* (1992) p.136 (21 May 1919).

[83]Maurice, *art.cit.*, pp.21-22 has a lucid overview of the gains Lloyd George thought could be had from the Palestine offensive for the home front; and how occupation of Palestine would give Britain power at the peace table.

occupied the Sinai Peninsula and she wanted to conquer at least Palestine before making any peace. When Jerusalem was taken the Turks were not disposed to negotiate seriously as they were waiting on the possible success of the Ludendorff offensives. It was also the case that Jerusalem was not sufficient to make Palestine economically viable, and so Britain sought to push up to Mount Hermon to obtain the vital springs of the River Jordan. That Palestine was to become a British preserve gives some indication of the wider concerns lying behind the Palestine campaign.

In 1917 peace intimations were put out to Turkish representatives in Switzerland by Smuts, Aubrey Herbert and Basil Zaharoff.[84] It would seem that the Turkish emissaries were acting on behalf of Talaat Pasha, one of the triumvirate who ruled Turkey.[85] This in some measure explains why the talks came to nothing: the divides within the Turkish ruling elite made agreement over splitting from Germany very difficult. Part of the explanation though comes from the fact that Britain did not want to forge any peace settlement until she had occupied substantial parts of the Middle East. It would seem that the Turks were willing to consider conceding parts of their Arab lands, but not Anatolia proper.[86] In 1933 T.E. Lawrence remembered how Britain negotiated with Talaat Pasha during the war,[87] and, as late as October 1918, Zaharoff was transferring £600,000 in Switzerland, which was connected to a possible peace with Turkey.[88]

These peace contacts were very tentative. The Turks were divided, and were also awaiting the possible success of the impending German offensive in France in 1918.[89] But it seems the main reason that negotiations were not taken

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[84]Smuts' negotiations were carried out by Philip Kerr (Kerr papers GD/40/17/1052 & CAB1/25, file 27, 26 Dec.1917, annexes A & B). Herbert outlines his talks in Herbert papers, diaries, June-July 1917 (also 4 Sept.1917) and are repeated in M.Fitzherbert, *The Man Who Was Greenmantle: A Biography of Aubrey Herbert* (1984) pp.192-194. Zaharoff (an arms dealer caricatured by Hergé in his Tintin story *The Broken Ear* (1976)) was also used as an intermediary (see Derby papers, 920/DER(17)28/1, Derby to Balfour, 17 Sept.1917).

[85]The leadership of Turkey was more complicated than the usual idea of a clique of three. See F.Ahmad, Book Review of U.Trumpener's *Germany and the Ottoman Empire 1914-18* in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Jan.1970, p.102.

[86]CAB21/59, 'Memo on the Turkish Attitude Towards Peace', Intelligence Bureau, 16 Jan.1918 (v) & FO899/4/756 (20/11/17) p 3. Lord Bertie (A.Lennox (ed), *Diary of Lord Bertie of Thame* (1924) vol.ii, p.194) indicates Herbert's peace moves involved some autonomous status for Turkey's outlying provinces. See V.Rothwell, *British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy 1914-18* (1971) chs.3-4 for overview of peace moves.

[87]Liddell Hart papers, 9/13/21, Talks with Lawrence 1919-1935, 1 Aug.1933. Lawrence, writing to William Yale, said Britain carried on negotiating with Turkey throughout 1918 (from D.Garnett (ed), *The Letters of T.E.Lawrence* (1938) p.672).

[88]Lloyd George papers, F/30/2/52, Davidson to Stevenson, 23 Oct.1918 (also *ibid.*, Long to PM, 22 Oct.1918).

[89]LP&S/11/130:P10/1918, Memorandum by Intelligence Bureau, Department of Information, Section E, 26 Dec.1917, p.21.

further was that the British did not want to conclude a peace when all that their armies occupied was Sinai. If a separate peace had been brokered, the efforts of those like Mark Sykes to use the Arabs by creating friendly client régimes might have been thwarted. On returning home from the Middle East in 1917, Sykes wrote to Clayton that he had arrived 'in the nick of time' to prevent the Foreign Office negotiating with the Turks and thus 'destroying everything'. Sykes was relieved that Zionism had 'held good', and the moves to negotiate in Switzerland 'were foiled'. Pointing to the significance of certain groups of Arabs to British policy-making, Sykes added how: 'Ten years tutelage under the Entente and the Arabs will be a nation'.[90] Even Allenby, writing Robertson in October 1917, pointed to the necessity of not negotiating with the Turks while they had, 'dominion over Syria and Arabia'.[91]

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This is the imperial dimension mentioned in the Introduction, and is a central part of understanding the motivation behind the Palestine campaign. The occupation of Palestine and Mesopotamia was seen to be vital for British strategy, more especially as Russia's collapse in 1917 resulted in increasing instability in the Caucasus and Trans-Caspia regions, and so an established British presence in the Middle East was vital. Much of what is to follow in this thesis is Britain's attempt to 'unmake' the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 which had internationalised Palestine, and given France a dominating position in Mosul, Syria and Cilicia.[92] By conquering Palestine, and by assisting the Hashemites to occupy Trans-Jordan and Syria, Britain hoped to secure her position in the Middle East. Success by Allenby and the E.E.F. was essential if this objective were to be realised. Britain's ultimate aim was to create a new Middle East favourable to the interests of the British empire. Britain wanted to alter the Sykes-Picot agreement, worked out when the E.E.F. was still entrenched by the Suez Canal, and to incorporate the E.E.F.s successes in the last two years of the war.

Marian Kent's recently published volume on the role that oil played in British policy is explicit on Britain's designs on parts of the Middle East: 'Britain's fundamental strategic aim in its post-war diplomacy had been to protect India and the route to India by "a chain of contiguous areas under British influence".'[93] Kent also outlines how rail and air communications across Arabia

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[90]Sykes papers, DDSY(2)/11/61, Sykes to Clayton, 22 July 1917.
[91]WO106/718, Allenby to Robertson, 19 Oct.1917.
[92]'Unmaking' the agreement is the title of one of Kedourie's chapters in *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire 1914-1921* (1987). See map 4 also.
[93]Kent, *Moguls and Mandarins: Oil, Imperialism and the Middle East in British Foreign Policy, 1900-1940* (1993). p 3 (see pp.100-101 also).

were seen as vital, and that the British General Staff were keen to expand the area under British rule. Malcolm Yapp, reviewing Kent's edition, disputes some of these claims pointing to the need 'to take note of the extreme reluctance of the military to enter into additional commitments' in the Middle East, preferring to concentrate on security closer to home.[94] The analysis in this thesis shows that not only military planners, but also the politicians, did want to acquire — or at least have some control over — areas of the Middle East beyond Egypt and the Suez Canal. At the post-war peace conference Lloyd George secured British control of Palestine and Mosul, and tried to get France to agree to the oasis of Tadmor in the Syrian desert becoming part of Mesopotamia. Lloyd George's actions do support the view that behind Allenby's Palestine campaign there lay wider and more profound British concerns stretching beyond just battlefield victories.

Britain's cultivation of friendly relations with the Hashemites in the Hejaz, and Ibn Saud in the Nejd, should be seen within this wider view of the Middle East. The Hashemites' June 1916-October 1918 Arab Revolt was particularly important for Britain. If victory were not total, and some autonomous status for the Arabs was the choice in a post-war era influenced by Wilsonian self-determination then local groups as allies would be vital; if victory were more complete then Arab allies established in the Levant would also be of great value. Leopold Amery's timeless comment put Britain's aim succinctly: 'The object of British policy can still be defined, as Pitt defined it in the great revolutionary war, by the one word "security"'.[95]

In the last two years of the war Amery produced four memoranda that clearly illustrate the main goals of British policy *vis-à-vis* the Turks and Germans. Amery's analysis also says much about Britain's attitude to France, who, while a war-time ally, was still seen as a potential threat. Britain wished to establish herself in part of the region (*viz.* Palestine), and create a friendly Arab client state using Prince Feisal in another part of the Middle East: Syria (which had been promised to France).[96] Amery was clear that Britain's dilemma was twofold: firstly, how to predict how the war would end and plan for immediate eventualities; secondly, to look beyond the war to see what Britain might need for her security *post bellum.*

In 1917, before the second battle of Gaza, Amery in a Committee of Imperial Defence paper wrote: 'before we can really enter upon any Peace

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[94]Yapp, review of *Moguls and Mandarins* in *Middle Eastern Studies*, January 1995, p.195.
[95]CAB29/1, P17 'Notes on Possible Terms of Peace', 11 Apr.1917, by L.Amery, p.1.
[96]CAB29/1, P17 'Notes on Possible Terms of Peace', 11 Apr.1917; CAB25/43, 'The Turkish and South Russian Problem', 4 Jan.1918; CAB25/73, 'The Political Aspects of the Campaign of 1919', 21 Mar.1918; CAB25/87, 'War Aims and Military Policy', 15 June 1918 (copy in Lloyd George papers, F/2/1/25): all by Amery.

Conference with reasonable hopes of securing a satisfactory peace, we still have to accomplish certain definite military tasks'. These two tasks were to achieve ascendancy over Germany on the Western Front, and, 'to drive the Turks entirely out of Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Armenia'.[97] By January 1918, Amery was writing about the importance of not only creating a new anti-German federal Russia, but on the need to detach Turkey from Germany, and the Arab lands from Turkey.[98] Then on 21 March 1918, the day that the Ludendorff offensives broke, Amery concluded that one of the three main British peace minima was: 'The protection of the Suez Canal and Persian Gulf by excluding the German sphere of power from Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia'.[99] In the same report Amery stressed the need to establish a barrier to German ambitions in the Middle East, and friendly Arab régimes would be a central part of obstructing the German threat.

Leopold Amery's longest memorandum came in June 1918, and was a sequel to his P17 report of 1917. In this memorandum can be seen Amery's holistic approach to British imperial security, with a central tenet of his strategy being the importance of the Middle East for the British empire. Palestine and Syria were to be part of the *cordon sanitaire* against any German *Drang nach Osten.* Amery's view was that if the war were to end with the Central powers in a dominating position in the Middle East:-

> For the British Commonwealth such a conclusion of the war would be the beginning of a not very distant end. After a few years devoted to economic recovery — for the sake of which she [Germany] is prepared to make some territorial concessions, without in the least renouncing her ultimate territorial ambitions — to the completion of her railway system to the Suez Canal and the confines of India, and to the equipment of her submarine bases in East Africa, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, Germany would be ready for the next move in the historic Prussian process of linking up and extension.[100]

In the same June 1918 report Amery added how if, 'when peace negotiations are seriously opened we have got our main Eastern objectives in hand...then we shall have created a situation in which their occupation of Allied territory in Europe will have lost most of its bargaining power for the enemy'.[101] Amery was very much reflecting the worry that the war would go beyond 1918, and could well end with German troops still stationed in France. The

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[97]CAB29/1, p.11.
[98]CAB25/43, p.1.
[99]CAB25/73, pp.3-5. Other two minima were occupation of Germany's African colonies & liberation of northern France/Belgium. See also Amery, *Political Life*, vol.ii, p.104.
[100]CAB25/87, p.3.
[101]*Ibid.*, p.7.

negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference, which will be discussed later in this thesis, support Amery's conclusions. Lloyd George and the War Cabinet acted to establish Britain in the Middle East, although with a defeated Germany, it was France who was seen as more of a threat. The Anglo-French discussions from September 1918 reinforce the idea that the Palestine campaign needs to be analysed in terms of its imperial value, and not simply to follow the Robertson line that it was a waste of resources. This does not mean that while the war continued Robertson did not have a strong argument as the main fighting was in France, but any complete examination of Allenby's campaign needs to take into account wider benefits for the British empire which could result from success in Palestine. Germany's defeat was more comprehensive and sudden than expected, and this upset Britain's worry that Germany would remain a threat in the East. Amery's concerns, as embodied in his memoranda, were an attempt to cover all contingencies. William Yale, America's special agent with the E.E.F., reported back to the State Department in November 1917 that the, 'British appear to be studying all the different solutions of the question, and to be waiting on events to shape themselves, before determining upon a definite and fixed policy'.[102]

With the Arab Revolt in June 1916 Britain committed herself to the Hashemites, and Allenby's operations were complicated by the need to take into account the Arab Revolt whose use was to be more than just one of military assistance. It is the contention here that Feisal and his Northern Arab Army were established by the British in Damascus on 1 October 1918 for political-imperial reasons. Earlier in 1918, during the Trans-Jordan raids, the British encouraged Feisal to move into Trans-Jordan, again as part of the attempt to build up Feisal politically. The long-term value of the Hashemites was highlighted by a Political Intelligence Department memorandum in December 1918 which observed: 'then overtures from Hussain...showed that, with diplomatic skill, we might escape from it [Britain's previous policy of supporting the Ottoman empire] by fostering an anti-Turkish Muslim power...Hussein's attitude towards ourselves and Islam fits in admirably with our interests'. The report went on to assert that: 'Whatever the 1916 [Sykes-Picot] agreement may provide, the French, if they establish themselves at Damascus, will make their influence felt over a greater part of the Arabian peninsular. It is no exaggeration to say that the presence of the French here would be at least as detrimental to British interests as the presence of the Russians was in...Persia'.[103] France, almost as much as Germany, was seen as a power who could possibly challenge Britain in the Middle East.

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[102]Yale papers, box 1: file 2, report no.3, 12 Nov.1917, p.2.

[103]FO371/4352, PC130, PID, 'Memo on French and Arab claims in ME', 19 Dec.1918 (copy also in FO371/4354). PID was part of the Foreign Office.

The ideas and plans of Amery are ones to be taken seriously.[104] If the 'proof of the pudding is in the eating', much of what happens from October 1918 is exactly British attempts to use Allenby's army of occupation to manipulate Anglo-French negotiations to Britain's advantage. That this was so indicates that there was political value to be had from Allenby's successes. Lloyd George's opposition to the Boer War and his modest background did not make him anti-empire. Lloyd George was aware of the value of the British empire, and of the need to maintain and extend its area of rule: and his use of Sykes on various missions to the Middle East confirms the Prime Minister's awareness of the importance of this area.[105] As Kenneth Morgan points out: 'The Welsh radical heritage was overlain with a lively concern for Britain's imperial responsibilities and commitments'.[106] Elizabeth Monroe, author of *Britain's Moment in the Middle East* (1963), commented in *The Times* in 1967 that Lloyd George wanted to break the military stalemate in France by using campaigns such as the one in Palestine, adding that these peripheral operations were also, 'likely to produce bargaining counters in the way of territory — German East Africa, Mesopotamia, Palestine, and possibly northern Syria'.[107] Being the consummate politician that he was, Lloyd George was not going to let pass the opportunity to use British power, as represented by the E.E.F. army of occupation, in his political dealings. This he did at Versailles, and he used Allenby's victories not only to try and get the French to agree to various wishes of the British in the Middle East, but also as leverage in the wider European settlement. The irony is that the victory of the E.E.F. gave Britain the ability to alter policy with regard to France, her erstwhile ally, while Germany descended into near revolution and impotence, and was no longer an immediate threat. However, Germany's post-war weakness was not evident in 1917 when British policy-makers were trying to decide on how best to keep open the route to India. The worst case scenario was a contest between 'rim' powers such as Britain, America and Japan versus a German-dominated Europe, and in this situation colonial conquests were vital. In this context, Allenby's campaign had a significance beyond just defeating the Ottomans, and these imperial concerns need to be taken into account in any full analysis of the Palestine campaign.

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[104]For Amery's political influence: D.C.Watt, *Personalities and Policies: Studies in the Formulation of British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century* (1965) pp.29, 33; C.Bartlett, *British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century* (1989) p.26. Also M.Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East 1792-1923* (1987) pp.288-89 for Amery's role in deciding desiderata.

[105]Lloyd George's support for the British empire is outlined in G.Fry, *Lloyd George and Foreign Policy: Vol.1 The Education of a Statesman 1890-1916* (1977) pp.58, 257-58.

[106]*Consensus and Disunity: The LG Coalition Government 1918-22* (1979) p.111.

[107]2 Nov.1967, 'Fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration to the Jews'.

CHAPTER TWO: GENERAL ALLENBY'S ARRIVAL IN EGYPT AND THE THIRD BATTLE OF GAZA, JUNE-DECEMBER 1917.

> One difficulty in recreating the past is that the reader knows how it will turn out, so that events have an air of inevitability. That was not true at the time...(William Manchester, *Goodbye Darkness* (1982) p.183.)

On 12 July 1917, fourteen days after taking command of the E.E.F., Allenby sent his first despatch detailing his needs.[1] Unlike the controversial despatches discussed in the previous chapter, this assessment of Allenby's was a reasoned account of the situation in Palestine. In his report Allenby reviewed the Turkish defences thus:-

> The position at present occupied by the Turks on the Gaza Beersheba line are of considerable natural strength...He [the Turk] has made Gaza into a strong modern fortress heavily wired and entrenched. Its centre is a mass of houses, gardens and Cactus hedges offering every facility for protracted defence.[2]

To overcome the enemy, Allenby put forward two proposals. Firstly, he wanted two additional infantry divisions and increased aeroplanes and artillery.[3] Secondly, he adopted a scheme for rupturing the Turkish line by attacking Beersheba, which lay at the eastern extremity of the Turks' position. Once Beersheba was taken Gaza would fall as the E.E.F. force outflanked Gaza from the east and rolled up the Turkish defensive system.

Considering that the plan to attack Beersheba may not have been the best one, it is worth asking who exactly drew it up. It seems that many people had a hand in its inception, but the one person who did not was Allenby. This is not really a criticism, as Allenby would naturally listen to the senior officers with local expertise: indeed the E.E.F. had a staff system precisely to inform and direct its commander. The records show that Lt.-Gen. Philip Chetwode (XX Corps' commander) and Brig.-Gen. Guy Dawnay (Chetwode's Chief of Staff) were the major planners behind attacking Beersheba, and not Gaza, as Murray had done twice already.[4] The beginning of the plan to assault Beersheba seems to

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[1]CAB24/20/GT1413, GOC-in-C Egypt to CIGS, 12 July 1917.

[2]*Ibid.* p.1. The CCWP picked up on this view in their 'Cabinet Committee on War Policy. Draft Interim Report', 19 July 1917, pp.56-57 (from Curzon papers, Mss EurF112/136)

[3]CAB24/20 GT1413, 12 July 1917, pp.4-5.

[4]In Wavell's correspondence in the Allenby papers Chetwode says Dawnay drew up the actual details (6/VIII/31, Chetwode to Wavell, 17 Feb.1939). Point also made by Chauvel in a letter to the Australian War Memorial, 1 Jan 1936, p 3 (see appendix 1 of this thesis). Writing to Edmonds, Chetwode said that he handed Allenby the plan as he got off the boat (Edmonds papers, II/1/32, Chetwode to Edmonds, 26 Sept 1926[?]).

have come around the time of the first two battles of Gaza, and both Maj.-Gen. S.F. Mott (commander of the 53rd Division) and Maj.-Gen. C.M. Dobell — who left the E.E.F. as Eastern Force commander at the time of the spring 1917 Gaza battles with 'a touch of the sun' — also seem to have had a hand in the plan to attack the Turkish flank.[5]

The argument of this chapter is that Allenby should have attacked Gaza, and not wasted the energy of the E.E.F. on the capture of Beersheba. However, this is not to say that Allenby thoughtlessly adopted the wrong plan. Writing to Clive Garsia (G.S.O.1 with the 54th Division) after the war, Chetwode remarked how Allenby 'very generously included' Chetwode's appreciation 'in his official papers, but I can assure you that he did not accept the plan until he had gone most closely into all possible alternatives'.[6] Because of a mix of factors, including poor intelligence work, the E.E.F. misread the Turks and this resulted in the Beersheba plan to attack on the eastern flank being Allenby's choice when he came out to Egypt.

For his proposed assault Allenby was persuaded to include the 75th Division, in the process of forming, as one of his required additional divisions. Thus, the arrival in August of the 10th (Irish) Division from Salonika gave Allenby his two additional divisions, although the 10th was depleted due to malarial casualties after its time at Salonika.[7] Therefore, in total, the E.E.F. had seven infantry divisions and three cavalry divisions, as the 60th (London) Division had come in June from Salonika and was equipping. These were formed on 12 August into three corps: two composed of infantry (XX and XXI) and one of cavalry (Desert Mounted Corps — D.M.C.). With regard to artillery, Allenby saw his needs as being some 116 heavy pieces, besides a full complement of divisional 18-pdrs. and 4.5-inch howitzers. That is, the infantry divisions would have 48 guns in three brigades of three batteries with thirty-six 18-pdrs. and twelve 4.5-inch howitzers; the cavalry would have twelve 13-pdrs. in three batteries of Royal Horse Artillery in one brigade.[8]

The E.E.F. received, *in toto*, between 82-90 of the heavy guns, and all the divisional artillery with the exception of two 6-gun batteries.[9] Allenby also

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[5]See CAB45/78, authors A-D, Dawnay to Edmonds, 25 Apr.1928. For Dobell's dismissal CAB44/15, Murray to Robertson, 22 Apr.1917. As to Dobell having a part in the plan (Dawnay papers, 69/21/5, Dawnay to Wavell, 20 Aug 1926); while for Mott (Dawnay papers, 69/21/3, Dawnay to Col.Aeron-Thomas, 7 July 1950).

[6]Dawnay papers, 69/21/3, Chetwode to Garsia, April 1937[?].

[7]Robertson did not object to the 10th Division going to Egypt as the climate was better and the command British (Wavell, *The Palestine Campaigns* (1933) ft.p.90 & ft.p.112).

[8]See Allenby's 12 July request (CAB24/20/GT1413) pp.4-5; *Official History*, vol.ii, p.14 & table in Wavell, *Palestine*, pp.112-113.

[9]Comparing the *Official History* (vol.ii, pp.14-5) with Wavell, *Palestine*, pp.112-3 there seems to be a slight discrepancy. The EEF ration strength for 5 Nov.1917 gives 462 guns: full divisional complement plus 90 (heavy?) guns (in WO106/43, GHQ Egypt to WO, pp.2737-8).

seems to have made his heavy gun requirements based on eight divisions, so his reduced number of 82-90 guns was for seven divisions only. The *Official History* concluded that Allenby's, 'demands for heavy artillery were...cut down, but not seriously. Generally speaking he had not been stinted.'[10] This sentiment was echoed by Robertson who felt that Allenby, 'would have received nearly all the artillery he had asked for'.[11]

In respect of aeroplanes, the question of reinforcing the E.E.F. not only with increased numbers of machines, but also improved quality, was one addressed by Allenby. This was essential if Allenby's coming battle preparations were to be kept secret. Under Murray the E.E.F. had been handicapped by the improved performance of the German planes, and even Cairo was bombed.[12] With his new Bristol fighters Allenby was finally able to deal with the enemy air menace, and gain air superiority, something he retained for the rest of the war.[13] This not only gave the E.E.F. an enhanced offensive capability, but also improved intelligence gathering capabilities. The Turks were certainly well aware of the change in air power, as a captured report shows: 'In my [author unclear] last report I indicated that in the matter of aircraft the enemy had enormous superiority, which consisted less in the personality of the pilots than in the quality of the machines. Things have got so far that no further air reconnaissance is done by the 7th and 8th [Turkish] Armies.'[14]

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With this new improved force the question was to what effect would the new commander put it? Here one can find two faults that allowed the Turks during the third battle of Gaza to make an orderly retreat to new defensive positions just north of Jerusalem. From this new front the Turks defeated the E.E.F. in the Trans-Jordan raids, and were not dislodged until the war's end. Firstly, there is the question of whether Allenby's plan of battle was suited to dealing with the Turkish defences; secondly, there is the question of whether Allenby misread Turkish capabilities and intentions, on both the tactical and strategical level.

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[10] *Official History*, vol.ii, p.15.

[11] CAB23/13/210(a), 10 Aug.1917, p.1 (CIGS also says Allenby got 4 of the 5 air squadrons asked for).

[12] Robertson papers, I/32/25a-b, Murray to Robertson, 10 May 1916. P.G.Elgood, *Egypt and the Army* (1924) p.275 for bombing of Cairo.

[13] A.Chadwick in an oral recording in 1980 remembered how the arrival of Bristol fighters made the difference for the AFC (IWM9459/2 reel 2). See also H.Jones, *Official History of the War in the Air* (1935 & 1937) vol.v, pp.230-231.

[14] Clayton papers, 694/6/6-8, 'Translation of a document captured by Desert Mounted Corps during operations 19th to 21st September 1918.'

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In assessing in his July report that Gaza's defences were formidable, Allenby was very much adopting Chetwode's view.[15] Chetwode was not alone in thinking Gaza well defended, and would be best taken by threatening its flank, but was Chetwode's appreciation the correct one?[16] Colonel Kress von Kressenstein, the senior German officer with the Turks — replaced by Erich von Falkenhayn after third Gaza — recollected that the, 'wire entanglements were poor owing to lack of material', while Franz von Papen added that the whole of his, 'long front was very thinly held, but with the exception of one or two modest reserve units, every available man was in the front line. There was no defence in depth.' Von Papen went on to say that while the defences might have been adequate by 1914 standards, they would never have stood up to a typical Western Front bombardment.[17]

The defence in depth that the Germans employed to such deadly effect on the Western Front could not properly be instituted with the Turks. It was felt the Turkish soldier would be unable to cope with mobile warfare; the sheer lack of numbers and *matériel* prevented the Germans from pushing through a series of defensive layers with the front line lightly held. The Germans expected a heavy artillery assault from Allenby, but could do little to counter it.[18] One should not extrapolate from the perceived failure of artillery in France, and conclude that it would therefore have failed in Palestine.

Turkish intransigence only served to compound the difficulties of countering Allenby's artillery superiority. Talking to General Refet Pasha, XXII Corps' commander at Gaza, von Papen pointed out the desirability of keeping two (of three) divisions in reserve, while manning the forward positions as lightly as possible. The future Turkish war minister, 'gave me a charming smile and replied, "*J'ai bien compris, mon cher Commandant, mais j'y suis, j'y reste*".'[19]

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[15]Chetwode seems to have been behind the Beersheba plan. In 'Notes on the Palestine Operation', 21 June 1917 (Chetwode papers, PP/MCR/C1, folder 3) Chetwode says that Allenby adopted his plan on arriving in Egypt. Parts of Allenby's July report are copied straight from these notes of Chetwode's.

[16]On 8 Nov.1917 Clayton remarked on the strength of Gaza's defences (Wingate papers, 146/8/63-65, Clayton to Wingate); and R.Coldicott, *London Men in Palestine and how they Marched to Jerusalem* (1919) p.37 was an EEF officer with the same opinion.

[17]K.von Kressenstein, 'The Campaign in Palestine from the Enemy's Side', *RUSI Journal*, 1922, p.508 & Von Papen, *Memoirs* (1952) p.71.

[18]Col Hussein Husni Amir Bey outlines the run down Turkish defences in *Yilderim* (n p.) part 3 (translated by G.O.de R.Channer: copy in AWM45[5/1] 'Heyes papers').

[19]Von Papen, *Memoirs*, p.73.

General Allenby's July report, 'included a request to be supplied with heavy artillery on the same scale as the Western Front'.[20] Lt.-Gen. E.S. Bulfin was to attack Gaza with his XXI Corps on 1-2 November following Chetwode's anticipated capture of Beersheba on 31 October, but his preparatory bombardment had started on the 27th.[21] For this 'softening up' Bulfin was able to employ the 48 guns of each of his three infantry divisions, 68 heavy corps guns, and 8 mountain guns in a composite force. The *Official History* records that the bombardment, 'was the heaviest carried out in the course of the war outside the European theatres'. The official account is also good in bringing out the comparative aspect:-

> It is interesting to note that 68 heavy guns to 4,000 yards [main attack frontage], or one to every 60 yards, is exactly the proportion employed by the British on the first day of the Battle of the Somme...when we take into account the naval artillery and the enormous weight of its projectiles...this bombardment must be reckoned a very heavy one by any standard.[22]

Franz von Papen, on the receiving end, remembered a 'tremendous bombardment', while one of the ratings offshore on H.M.S. *Comet* was equally struck by the power of the Allied naval shelling.[23] One is loath to use the Somme as an example of the successful use of artillery, but the mined dugouts and all round military efficiency of the Germans stood in marked contrast to the Ottoman empire, and their relatively effete armed forces. (Readers might care to compare Anthony Clayton's description of the 'Hindenburg line' in France, with Commandant Larcher's analysis of the deficiencies facing Falkenhayn.[24])

Visitors after the battle were struck by the quantity of ordnance used. In December 1917 Ronald Storrs, who became the military governor of Jerusalem, visited Gaza and wrote in his diary how he, 'passed shell craters, many from 8-inch guns, on all sides as we clambered up to Ali Muntar, which commands the whole district...The hill itself had been almost shelled away, and must have been untenable long before we could occupy it.'[25] Writing to his wife on 2 November,

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[20]Robertson, *Soldiers and Statesmen* (1926) vol.ii, p.173. Also in Robertson papers, I/16/6a, 'Palestine', 19 July 1917.

[21]For the cavalry charge to take Beersheba see I Jones, 'Beersheba: The light horse charge and the making of myths', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, October 1983, pp.26-37.

[22]*Official History*, vol.ii, p 65.

[23]Von Papen, p.74. and Misc. Collection at IWM and letter written 30 Oct.-12 Nov.1917 by rating on HMS *Comet* pp.14-17.

[24]Clayton, 'Robert Nivelle and the French Spring Offensive 1917', in B.Bond (ed), *Fallen Stars: Eleven Studies of Twentieth Century Military Disasters* (1991) pp.58-59 and Commandant M.Larcher, 'La Campagne du Général de Falkenhayn en Palestine', *Revue Militaire Française*, October 1925, p.51.

[25]Storrs, *Memoirs* (1972) p.290 (diary for 19 Dec.).

Guy Dawnay described the ease with which the Turks at Gaza collapsed, adding: 'though we didn't get many prisoners...as our bombardment had more or less blasted the...enemy's front line system before we went in.' Dawnay's comment on Turkish counter attacks: 'three of which were blown to pieces by our artillery fire before they could develop', conveys the dominance that the British had in this arm.[26] Maj.-Gen. Stewart Hare, commander of the 54th Division (at Gaza), echoed Dawnay's observations, in a letter to his father on 9 November. Hare not only remarked on the pounding the Turks had received for six days, but said their wire had been well cut, and the enemy positions fell 'without difficulty'.[27]

In the Australian files at Canberra there is a report by a Major Pardoe that supports the view that Gaza's defences were so weak that Allenby should have made his main attack there.[28] Examining the defences straight after the battle, Pardoe commented on the rough nature of the defences and the fact that these defences were only evident in the front line. Thus, any breakthrough would not have come up against the formidable reserve trenches so familiar on the Western Front, or any substantial reserve force. With the machine gun, perhaps the weapon most remembered from the First World War, Pardoe saw the Turks as having neglected the basic principles that made it so efficient. Turkish redoubts had no proper cover, and Pardoe was struck by the accuracy and destructive power of the E.E.F. bombardment on these rough emplacements.[29] The Turks were also without proper gas masks, and while the official line was that no gas was used at third Gaza by Allenby's force, Henry Gullett indicates that it was and that it was most effective.[30]

The usual illustration of the third battle of Gaza (and the battle of Megiddo in September 1918) as the swan-song of cavalry in war somewhat distorts objective analysis.[31] It could be argued that Palestine did, indeed, offer the scope to use mounted troops, but that this was not realised at the third battle of Gaza. While the Yeomanry Mounted Division screened the centre of the line, the remaining two cavalry (and four infantry) divisions were employed against Beersheba. Various difficulties, notably water shortages, hampered the pursuit by the cavalry, and the Turks were allowed the space to escape. Meanwhile, the Gaza force was only able slowly to follow up the Turks as it had no cavalry, and

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[26]Dawnay papers, 69/21/2, letter to wife, 2 Nov.1917.

[27]Hare papers, folder on 3rd Gaza, letter to father, 9 Nov.1917.

[28]AWM25 923/23, 'Turkish Machine Gun Defences & Emplacements', by Maj Pardoe, 11 Nov.1917. See also *ibid* 'Report for DMC, 3/12/17 by Australian and NZ Mounted Division'.

[29]The problem was the lack of wood with which to build defences. The Turks had to strip Gaza of all its wood and this and E.E.F. shelling meant that Gaza was badly damaged (pictures in *Australian Light Horse in Sinai & Palestine* film in AWM 00042 & IWM film 11).

[30]Gullett papers, AWM40/58, 'Allenby's 1st Offensive' (gas was used by XXI Corps at Gaza).

[31]Falls, *Armageddon* (1964) p 34 says that Megiddo gave the cavalry 'a magnificent opportunity to wind up its career in success and glory'.

the Desert Mounted Corps had failed to surround the Turks from the east. To effect the capture of Beersheba, Allenby had had to strip XXI Corps of its transport and give it to XX Corps and the D.M.C. (two divisions of the D.M.C. were attached to XX Corps). Bulfin's infantry and yeomanry ultimately exhausted themselves in the hills round Jerusalem and, defeated, they had to be withdrawn. The infantry used against Beersheba then had to be brought up to renew the offensive, and with difficulty they secured Jerusalem. Hussein Husni Amir Bey, with the Turks, not only remarked on the timid nature of the British pursuit but concluded that: 'Once again, the British wasted four or five weeks. Instead of capturing JERUSALEM in the first week of November the town fell on 8th December.'[32]

In his book *A Key to Victory: A Study in War Planning* (1940) Clive Garsia strongly advocated what became known as the 'Gaza school' with the argument that Allenby should not have bothered assaulting Beersheba. Liddell Hart in *Through the Fog of War* concurs with Garsia and is also critical of the staff work at third Gaza.[33] Writing to the compilers of the *Official History* Garsia made his views clear: 'had the Cavalry Corps been available on that flank [Gaza], the disaster which ultimately overtook the Turkish army in 1918 might have befallen it twelve months earlier.'[34]

Both Dawnay and Falls argued with Garsia saying that G.H.Q. did consider the factors he made so much of, and Falls disagreed that the 'Gaza school' was omitted from the official account.[35] Garsia's argument ignored the great range of concerns facing Allenby, and his 'automatic system of planning' in *A Key to Victory* is hard to understand. Having said this, the evidence in this chapter supports Garsia's view that Gaza should have been the main objective at the third battle of Gaza. Garsia spoke to von Kressenstein after the war, and his conversation over water supply allows access to a point of some importance: 'Kress has assured me that he gave the strictest orders to have them [the wells at Beersheba] destroyed...not only was the capture of known wells vital to the operation but had a number of wells whose existence was unknown [not] been discovered the operation would have broken down.'[36]

The Germans' skill at demolition and laying booby-traps makes the fact that Beersheba's wells were captured largely intact surprising. Part of the

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[32]Hussein Husni, *Yilderim* (n p.) part 4, ch.4. Hussein Husni says that only 3,000 men stood between the E.E.F. and Jerusalem.

[33]Liddell Hart, p.100.

[34]CAB45/78, authors A-D, Garsia to Historical Section CID, 10 Oct 1928, p.3. Garsia makes the same point in Liddell Hart papers, 1/306/1, Garsia to Liddell Hart, 28 Apr.1934.

[35]Dawnay papers, 69/21/3, series of letters Mar.-Apr.1937 & Liddell Hart papers, 1/276/7, Falls to Liddell Hart, 14 May 1934 (see also *Official History*, vol.ii, pp.32-3).

[36]Liddell Hart papers, 1/306/4, Garsia to Liddell Hart, 10 May 1934. See also R.Preston, *The Desert Mounted Corps* (1921) pp.32-33.

explanation for this was that the German officer charged with the wells' destruction was away on leave.[37] The whole operation hinged on these wells as Brig.-Gen. W.H. Bartholomew (Chetwode's B.G.G.S.) pointed out in June 1917: 'there is apparently no water fit for the troops to drink on any part of the enemy's present line between Gaza and Beersheba, except at those places'.[38] The impression is given that the lack of water was an obstacle successfully overcome by the E.E.F. Thus the *Official History* gives examples of the skill and ingenuity with which water supplies were developed. Like the deception schemes which are supposed to have fooled the Turks into thinking that the main attack was coming at Gaza, the water problem is depicted as a challenge successfully overcome.[39]

If, however, the attack had gone through Gaza, the E.E.F. would have had their own railhead directly behind them. The navy could also have helped with supply from the sea as the railway was being pushed forward. Supply from the sea was not straight forward due to the nature of the coast (there were no harbours before Jaffa), but the navy became increasingly able to effect this supply route, using Rarotongan islanders from the Pacific as boatmen.[40]

The retreating Turks' railway could also have been used, although the British ultimately laid a completely new track up to the Jaffa-Jerusalem line. Using the Turkish 1.050 metre system — the Turks had standard gauge only to Rayak in Lebanon — the British, 'by the beginning of 1918...possessed a complete 1.050m gauge railway system in southern Palestine'. By 20 November 1917, 'the [Turkish] line was working up to Junction Station, the invaluable but rather worn-out captured locomotives being used'.[41] The railway system created allowed the British to distribute supplies from Egypt brought to Gaza and Beersheba by standard-gauge rail and to Jaffa by sea.

As it was, the cavalry attempting to turn the Turkish flank from the east were caught in the arid land between Gaza and Beersheba. The result being that the Turks were allowed to retire: 'Once free from the harassing menace of the

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[37]P.Dalbiac, *History of the 60th Division* (1927) p.123. The film *The Lighthorsemen* (1987) has an ALH trooper dramatically saving the wells.

[38]Bartholomew papers, 1/1, report to GOC, p.3, 17 June 1917 The Turks by contrast could drink brackish water (see Gullett papers, AWM40/75, 'Turks').

[39]*Official History*, vol.ii, p.23. Reference to the use of a pre-war Palestine Exploration Fund report seems to be one written by T.E.Lawrence and L.Wooley, *The Wilderness of Zin* (1914-15), although in it they say the old cities had no more rainfall than in 1914 and relied on frugal conservation (pp 17-18, 34) For deception ruses see Y.Sheffy, 'Institutionalised Deception and Perception Reinforcement: Allenby's Campaign in Palestine', in M.Handel (ed), *Intelligence and Military Operations* (1990).

[40]CAB24/4, G-199, 1 Mar.1918, p.3. For nature of coast see W.Lindsell, 'Military Administration in the Palestine Campaign', *The Journal of the Royal Artillery*, 1928-29, p.378. For Rarotongans see Wavell, *Allenby: A Study in Greatness* (1941) p.263.

[41]R.Tourret, *The Hedjaz Railway* (1989) pp.74-75. See also H.Hughes, *Middle East Railways* (1981) pp.34-37.

mounted troops, the Turks, who could always outmarch our infantry, would have experienced little difficulty in retiring rapidly to the north'.[42] Chetwode after the war admitted that there was several days' delay due to water difficulties, and this hiatus meant: 'It was now clear that the attempt to cut off the enemy forces had failed.'[43]

When Beersheba was captured, the seven wells of biblical times had been increased to some seventeen in number. The rapidity of the Australian Light Horse charge into Beersheba helped minimise destruction, and only two wells were totally demolished. The E.E.F. was also fortunate in that the Turks left behind 90,000 gallons of water in reservoirs.[44] Even with this advantageous position, the men and horses as they pushed on Sheria after Beersheba's fall suffered badly.[45] Soldiers from the 60th Division dropped out from the lack of water, while Allenby himself admitted in 1929 that horses went 72 hours without water.[46] The war diaries for the units involved also point to the serious nature of the water shortage; Gullett's notes show how the depth of the wells found meant troops had to be sent back to the pipeline head at Karm for watering, thus defeating the whole purpose of the flanking operation.[47] Colonel Archibald Wavell (to rise to high command in the Second World War) was with Allenby in 1917, and commented on the 'awkward and unrehearsed pause' before Chetwode could drive forward.[48] In this pause the Turks retired, and one must ask if more might not have been had by putting the cavalry on the Gaza front.

Analysis of the third battle of Gaza must question whether the plan devised ever had a chance of threatening the Turks with anything other than a retreat. If the Germans and Turks had been more efficient in their demolition efforts, the E.E.F. could well have had difficulty achieving what they did. The men and horses of XX Corps and the D.M.C. were often just marching about looking for water. The enhanced and largely intact Beersheba source of water was not sufficient, and the fact that it took some six weeks to capture Jerusalem stems, in large measure, from this tactical error.

The continued presence of the Turks as a fighting force in Palestine served as a distraction for Lloyd George in his attempts to redirect war strategy.

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[42]Preston, *Desert Mounted Corps*, p.50.
[43]CAB25/78, authors A-D, Chetwode to Macmunn, 17 May 1926. Quote, Preston, p 58.
[44]*Australian Official History*, pp 435-436.
[45]Ryrie papers, letter to wife, 5 Nov.1917. Gen Barrow wrote in 1939 that some horses went 84 hours without water (from Allenby papers, 6/VIII/19, Barrow to Wavell, 6 Jan.1939)
[46]Edmonds papers, II/2/197, Allenby to Edmonds, 22 July 1929 (see Hodgson papers, 66/145/1, Hodgson to Barnard, 8 Feb.1918 for similar remarks).
[47]Gullett papers, AWM40/59, 'Beersheba'. For Australian war diaries see AWM4[10/9], appendix to 4ALH Regt, 28 Oct.-28 Nov.1917, sheet 2. See also WO95/4550, GS Aust Mtd Div, Nov.1917, war diary entries 3 Nov.-10 Nov.1917.
[48]J.Connell, *Wavell: Scholar and Soldier* (1964) p.129.

The Prime Minister was forced to push for renewed action, and he did this by using the Supreme War Council to bypass Robertson. It is a debatable point whether Allenby could have occupied all of Palestine in late-1917, or even pushed on to Damascus. However, it can be argued that the plan he accepted for the third battle of Gaza was unlikely to seriously threaten the Turks.

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Lloyd George did get his Christmas present of Jerusalem for the nation, and he was acutely aware not only of its value for home-front morale, but of the negative attitude of the War Office to 'this historic triumph'.[49] Palestine was to continue as a source of friction between Lloyd George and the military over how to conduct the war as civil-military differences on the Palestine campaign spilled over into 1918.

The E.E.F. did eventually capture Jerusalem and this achievement must not be forgotten. Criticism of Lloyd George should be measured against the propaganda value of successes in peripheral war zone. In 1922 Herbert Asquith sent Aubrey Herbert the following riddle: 'Q: What must a man do to bathe safely among sharks? A: Have tattooed on his back "Lloyd George won the war". No shark could swallow that.' [50] While amusing, Asquith's poser ignores Lloyd George's all round proficiency as a war leader. The latter possessed skills the more noticeable when compared to Asquith's listless running of the war to December 1916. For a national war-effort a feat such as Jerusalem's capture was a propaganda *coup*. Lloyd George certainly made the most of Jerusalem's capture, announcing its fall first in the House of Commons, with the whole affair 'carefully stage-managed'.[51]

Back-issues of this author's local newspaper, *The Islington Daily Gazette*, clearly show the impact that Jerusalem's capture had for Britain's populace: 'By the capture of Jerusalem, General Allenby has made his Palestine campaign historic. More than military significance attaches to the surrender into British hands of a city held in reverence by all Christendom.' The *Gazette* then noted what the Germans had to say in their Cologne *Vokszeitung*: 'This is doubtless a success for the English, though more moral than military...the conqueror of the city, of course, gains a halo.'[52] These comments from a small newspaper show the value of Allenby's success. The media impact of Jerusalem's

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[49]Lloyd George, *War Memoirs* (1938) vol.ii, p.1092.
[50]From M.Fitzherbert, *The Man Who Was Greenmantle: A Biography of Aubrey Herbert* (1984) p.241.
[51]Newell, 'Learning The Hard Way: Allenby in Egypt and Palestine 1917-19', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, September 1991, p.372.
[52]*Islington Daily Gazette & North London Tribune*, 12 Dec 1917 (Islington Central Library).

fall was lessened by the Lansdowne letter on 29 November 1917, and then a huge munitions explosion in Halifax harbour in Canada in early-December 1917, but these were not events for which Lloyd George could have prepared. The positive aspects of the Palestine campaign for home front morale repeats the argument in the previous chapter comparing Lloyd George's wide range of concerns versus the narrower focus of Robertson.

If Allenby had decisively defeated the Turks in 1917, as he was to do at Megiddo in 1918, a negotiated settlement with the Turks might have been possible, and Lloyd George then persuaded to drop his scheme for a Palestine offensive in early-1918. The peace openings mentioned in the previous chapter could have been developed. But with the Turks in Palestine beaten but intact following the third battle of Gaza, and with the Ludendorff offensive impending, this was not to be.

* * * *

Turkish capabilities and intentions from 1917 support the idea that a British push against Gaza might have achieved a notable success. Cyril Cruttwell's study of the First World War shows that the Turkish high command starved the Palestine front of resources, and the lack of *matériel* seriously hampered the ability of the Turkish forces in Palestine to withstand the British:-

> Worst of all, Enver [Minister of War] and the governing military clique in Constantinople had lost all interest in the Palestine front. Any available men were despatched to adventures in the Caucasus and in Persia, where the peace of Brest-Litovsk had opened wide fields for Pan-Turanian dreams of empire...Supplies for Palestine became smaller and smaller.[53]

The British seem not to have realised the extent to which Turkish attention was focused away from Palestine. This is best shown by the inaccurate intelligence estimates of the numbers of reinforcements being sent to Palestine. The British were aware of Turkish encroachments into Caucasia, Trans-Caspia and Persia, but seemed to think that Turkey could attack both in Central Asia and Palestine. There was genuine confusion as to what was going to happen in the areas evacuated by Russian troops following the Russian Revolution. Possible Turco-German offensives in the Caucasian area obfuscated British planning. This produced a cautious strategy on the part of the British as they saw Turkish reinforcements going to the Caucasus and Palestine. The result of Russia's collapse in late-1917 was disorder, and the exaggerated reports of reinforcements

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[53]Cruttwell, *A History of the Great War* (1986) pp.618-619.

being sent to Palestine should be viewed in the context of the attempts to predict Turco-German moves in the swathe of territory from Ankara to Kabul.

Turkey's irredentist pretensions were known to Britain, and a long report in October 1917 outlined the worry that Russia's collapse had serious implications for the security of the British empire.[54] A corridor was being created along which the enemy could move towards Afghanistan, and reports of a Turco-German commission to Turkestan indicated the enemy was doing exactly this.[55] The Young Turks saw, 'the revolution in Russia as the predestined moment for the realisation of all their ambitious schemes in the direction of the Caucasus'.[56] The Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office in a May 1918 memorandum reported how the, 'rapid advance of the Germans eastwards through the Ukraine serves to draw attention once again to their evident designs upon the Caucasus'.[57]

Britain did her best to deal with this threat, but seems not to have realised how much of a drain the Caucasian drive was to have on other Turkish fronts. Britain presumed that Turkey would threaten in both Palestine and the Caucasus. In fact the much vaunted Turco-German threat in Central Asia was something of a will-o'-the-wisp. The Turks and Germans had a very uneasy relationship with one another, and in the Caucasus both had different conceptions of what they wanted, and which was the best local side to support.[58] By June 1918 the two ostensible allies were actually fighting one another near Tiflis, and Ulrich Trumpener feels some Germans would have preferred Britain to get Baku's oil, instead of the Turks.[59]

The Russians from 1914 had gradually advanced deep into Anatolia, and by 1917 had pushed the Turks into a perilous position. Russia's collapse had grave implications for Britain. The Turks chose to move into the vacuum created by Russia's demise, although this may not have been the best use of Turkey's scarce military resources. Some nine fully equipped Turkish divisions were raised for use in the Caucasus, and while this was a threat Britain had to deal with, using these troops in Palestine and Mesopotamia would have tied down more

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[54]CAB24/33/GT2781, 'Report on the Pan-Turanian Movement' by Ministry of Information, Oct.1917, p.15 (copy also in L/MIL/17/16/23).
[55]CAB24/144, WC Eastern Report, No.XL, 1 Nov.1917, appreciation. For an account of German threat to India see P.Glazebrook, *On Secret Service East of Constantinople* (1994).
[56]W.Allen & P.Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields: a History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border 1828-1921* (1953) p.459.
[57]FO371/4357, PID 122, 'The Caucasus', 18 May 1918.
[58]U.Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire 1914-18* (1968) p.63. See also F.Kazemzadek, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia 1917-21* (1951) & U.Trumpener, 'Suez, Baku, Gallipoli: The Military Dimensions of the German-Ottoman Coalition 1914-18', in K.Neilson & R.Prete (eds), *Coalition Warfare: An Uneasy Accord* (1983).
[59]Allen & Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields*, pp.477-478 & U.Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, ch.iv & p.188.

British forces.[60] The Germans, intent on using the resources of the Caucasus — by backing the Georgians — tried unsuccessfully to stop Turkey denuding her other fronts. Turkish troops employed in the Caucasus were promised increased pay and promotion with the effect that: 'The consequent drain on the Palestinian units became enormous, for only the sick and mortally exhausted could resist the lure of money and fame.'[61]

The result of Pan-Turanian ambitions was all too evident in the appalling condition of the Turkish troops opposing the British in Palestine: 'Facing the numerically superior and well equipped forces of General Allenby with generally undernourished and ill-clad troops, Liman [von Sanders, who replaced von Falkenhayn in March 1918] was particularly outraged by the fact that the Turks were frittering away both soldiers and supplies in their Transcaucasian adventures'.[62] Australians taken prisoner by the Turks all remembered how the first thing that their captors did was to strip them and take their clothes, giving the prisoners of war in return the Turkish rags that passed for uniforms.[63] Writing to Djemal Pasha in September 1917, von Kressenstein complained that he was losing 4,000 men per month, largely through disease.[64] For von Kressenstein there was little he could do, except wait for Allenby to make his attack: 'Dans ces conditions, l'offensive anglaise était attendue aves une vive anxiété'.[65] The morale of the Turkish troops was low and they lacked most of the comforts enjoyed by the men of the E.E.F. Some of the Turks had received no mail from home in years, and they awaited the E.E.F. assault in 'fragile tents' with 'nothing to cheer their spirits'.[66] Von Sanders, in his memoirs of the campaign, makes much of the fact that promised reinforcements never arrived, and that troops needed in Palestine were withdrawn to be used in the Caucasus.[67]

That the E.E.F. plan at the third battle of Gaza ignored many of the deficiencies of the Turks is explained in part by the gradual nature of the deterioration of the enemy. This combined with a fear that a long term German aim was, 'to dominate the Near East. Now he [Germany] varies his methods but

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[60]Allen & Muratoff, pp.477-78. See also M.Bowman-Manifold, *An Outline of the Egyptian and Palestine Campaigns 1914-18* (1922) p.94.

[61]F.Weber, *Eagles on the Crescent: Germany, Austria and the Diplomacy of the Turkish Alliance 1914-18* (1970) p.245.

[62]U.Trumpener, *Germany & OE*, pp.103-104.

[63]AWM30/B2.1-B2.14 (POW statements 1914-18).

[64]Hussein Husni, *Yilderim* , part 1, ch 4, 20 Sept.1917. Also *ibid.*, appendix 4, Kress to GOC 4th Army, 21 Sept.1917.

[65]Larcher, 'La Campagne Falkenhayn', *Revue Militaire Française*, Oct.1925, p.46.

[66]Hussein Husni, Yilderim, part 3, ch.5.

[67]L.von Sanders, *Five Years in Turkey* (1927) ch.19, pp.254-257 & C.Atkinson, 'Liman von Sanders on his experiences in Palestine', *The Army Quarterly*, January 1922, p.267. In 1919 a report on the collapse of Turkey undoubtedly prepared by von Sanders for the German general staff, summarised Sanders' view on the mismanagement of Yilderim operation (in WO32/5734).

not his aims...he still aims for the east'.[68] That this might be a real worry, and one that could adversely affect Allenby, was evidenced by a military mission (*Yilderim*) that the Germans were putting together for Middle East service.

The force in question was sent out from Germany in late-1917, and was to be joined by Turkish troops withdrawn from Galicia. The force was usually called *Yilderim*, meaning 'thunderbolt' or 'lightning' after the Ottoman ruler Bâyezîd (c.1360-1403), and for the Germans it was more normally referred to as *Heeresgruppe* (Army Group) *F.*[69] Its initial mission was to be the recapture of Baghdad, which had fallen to the British in March 1917. Von Falkenhayn, however, on visiting the front saw that the real threat came from the E.E.F., and diverted *Yilderim* to Palestine.[70] This was not a straight forward task as Enver Pasha (Minister of War) still wanted Baghdad retaken, while Djemal Pasha (Minister of Marine and Governor General of Syria) only wanted the *Yilderim* force if it could be under his control.[71] (There were three 'Djemals' in Syria during the war and they should not be confused.[72])

At first sight, the arrival of this force supports the idea that Allenby's approach at the third battle of Gaza avoiding a direct artillery-supported attack on Gaza town was justified. However, the German element, called 'Pasha II' or 'Asia Corps', was based round only three infantry battalions. This nucleus was added to an existing force ('Pasha I', essentially artillery and technical units), and was itself reinforced by four further battalions, but none of these German units arrived in time for the third battle of Gaza.[73]

The German units of *Yilderim* compensated for their lack of numbers with the quality of their troops and equipment. Reviewing Hauptmann Max Simon-Eberhard's account of his time with 'Pasha II', Edmonds draws attention to 'the high fighting power' of the German core, and the decisive role it was expected to play in any battle. Indeed, the three battalions of Germans were considered to be equal in value to three Turkish divisions, and each battalion was expected to be able to deal with a British brigade.[74] While the German units did perform well to the end of their service in Palestine, Edmonds is right to draw

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[68]Wilson papers, diaries (reel 8), 10 Mar.1918.
[69]CAB45/80, authors N-Y, H.Pirie-Gordon to Becke, 4 Apr.[?].
[70]C.Falls, 'Falkenhayn in Syria', *Edinburgh Review,* 1929, pp.275-277.
[71]Djemal Pasha, *Memories of a Turkish Statesmen 1913-1919* (1922) pp.185-9.
[72]Ahmed Jemal the Greater (Jemal I) was one of the triumvirate who ruled Turkey, and in December 1917 was recalled to Istanbul. His position as governor of Syria was taken over by Mohammed Jemal the Less (Jemal II), also GOC 4th Army till Damascus's fall. Mehmed Jemal (III) was GOC of the composite force at Tebuk (from FO882/7, 30 Sept.1918, 'Summary of Hejaz Revolts', appendix D).
[73]'Notes on Foreign War Books', *The Army Quarterly*, July 1939, p.357. For *Yilderim* order of battle see *Official History*, vol.ii, pp.42-43 & appendices 4, 5 & 6.
[74]Edmonds papers, V/4/1/1, review of *Mit dem AsienKorps zur Palästinafront*, 5 Jan.1928 (book by Max Simon-Eberhard).

attention to their very poor logistical backup, and to the fact that their strength was dissipated in piecemeal attacks.[75]

The reality by late-1917 was that no small specialist force, however competent, was going to be able to make up for the general deficiencies of the Ottoman empire. At first sight, the Turkish pledge of nine divisions for *Yilderim* meant it was a force to be taken seriously. However, of these nine divisions only two (the 19th and 24th) arrived in time to take part in the third battle of Gaza. The 20th Division arrived at the front before Jerusalem's fall, and two divisions were broken up *en route*. As for the remaining four divisions, they arrived fitfully and in a much depleted condition.[76] The state of the Turkish railway system, coupled with national war-weariness, made any Turkish division that arrived in Palestine very much a nominal formation.[77]

The British misread the capabilities and intentions of the Ottomans. Turkish troops released by Russia's collapse were used in a gradual drive on Baku and they were not sent to Palestine. Baku did not fall until September 1918, and the *Yilderim* force was not the threat it seemed. Allenby made his assessments and plans assuming that he would be threatened by the *Yilderim* force, and this potential threat was compounded by the unreliable water supply at Beersheba which could result in his troops being left without water.

On 10 August 1917 the War Cabinet instructed Robertson to inform Allenby: 'In view of the Russian situation the Turks may shortly be free to concentrate the greater part of their forces against you and Maude [the British commander in Mesopotamia] and in these circumstances it is not now possible to assign you any geographical objectives'.[78] That the Turkish intention was to move against Baku, and that the *Yilderim* force represented nothing like the threat imagined, were factors not fully understood in London.

In May 1917, a War Cabinet paper indicated that the Turks were, 'sending all their reinforcements to Syria, and are reported to intend a strenuous resistance there', and by July 1917 Aubrey Herbert was discussing the impending 'Falkenhayn offensive' with the War Cabinet.[79] The worry in London was whether large numbers of German troops would join the Turks. Here, intelligence reports exaggerated the extent of the German co-operation with *Yilderim*.

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[75]Edmonds papers, V/4/1/1, review, 5 Jan.1928.

[76]Order of arrival see *Official History*, vol.ii, p.24. See also C.C.R.Murphy, 'The Turkish Army in the Great War', *RUSI Journal*, February 1920, p.103.

[77]Overview of Turkey's railways see W.Stanley, 'Review of Turkish Asiatic Railways to 1918: Some Political-Military Considerations', *The Journal of Transport History*, November 1966 (published 1970), pp.189-203.

[78]CAB23/13/210(a), 10 Aug.1917, p.1.

[79]CAB24/GT882, 20 May 1917 & CAB24/GT1574, 29 July 1917, p.7.

Information from Rotterdam in September 1917 showed that four German divisions were on their way to Constantinople.[80]

The more usual estimate was that Germany was initially sending two divisions. Allenby, in his 9 October report requesting thirteen additional divisions, did so assuming that he would be facing eighteen Turkish divisions and: 'In addition we know two German Divisions are on their way to Aleppo and that others may follow. Consequently, if the Germans abandon the proposed recapture of Baghdad, I may possibly have to contend with 20 or more divisions in advancing to the line Jerusalem-Jaffa.'[81]

On 6 October, a British secret service interrogation of a deserter was circulated to the War Cabinet, and it seemed to confirm Allenby's assessment:-

> On September 5th [1917] a soldier described as Saxon, told me he belonged to a new division then going through a special course of training in Saxony before being sent to Palestine. Division was due to leave middle or end of September. Journey was to last 4 to 5 weeks. A second similar division was stated to be training.[82]

Intelligence from Berne in Switzerland in July 1917 stated that there were already 10,000 Germans, and a number of Austrians, in Istanbul; the American Consul in Aleppo in the same month estimated 400,000 men were being sent against Baghdad, 160,000 of whom were to be German.[83] These figures are remarkable considering the strength of the Ottoman armies in March 1917 was some 400,000 men on all fronts, and that at its zenith in 1915 the army's strength was no more than 650,000.[84]

General Robertson, eager to obstruct Lloyd George's plans for Palestine, was making equally pessimistic estimates of the possible force that could be arrayed against the E.E.F. After Murray's setbacks in the spring, the C.I.G.S. felt that the Turks might employ 200,000 troops in Syria, of which 60,000 could be maintained south of Jerusalem. While only 60,000 could be stationed at the front: 'The balance would, of course, be available to replace wastage, and generally make resistance more effective'.[85] As Allenby was preparing for the third battle of Gaza, the C.I.G.S. estimated that there were 52,000 Turks south of Jerusalem,

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[80]CAB23/4/230(4), 10 Sept.1917. Repeated in CAB23/4/238(4), 24 Sept.1917.
[81]Milner papers, V/B/360, Allenby to CIGS, 9 Oct.1917.
[82]CAB24/GT2218, 6 Oct 1917.
[83]L/P&S/11/124:P2885/1917, 6 July 1917 & L/P&S/11/127:P3956/1917, 24 July 1917.
[84]Allen & Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields*, p.439. Allen & Muratoff give maximum figure (in 1915) as 800,000, while A.Barker, *The Neglected War: Mesopotamia 1914-1918* (1967) pp.497-498 gives 650,000.
[85]Robertson, *S & S*, vol.ii. p.171.

with two German divisions en route.[86] By January 1918, Robertson assessed the number of Turks facing Allenby as 60,000, including 11,000 Germans, numbers which could increase to 70-80,000 by February 1918.[87]

In some measure, careful staging by the Germans, coupled with Greeks in the Ottoman army being mistaken for Germans, contrived to produce these exaggerated estimates of Turkish intentions and capabilities.[88] However, if Robertson and the General Staff had little enthusiasm for a redirection of resources away from France, the aforementioned estimates on the Turks were certainly fortuitous. A sense of alarm helped produce a cautious policy which was hard for Lloyd George to alter as it was based on military requirements.

Looking more closely at the respective orders of battle at the third battle of Gaza it soon becomes apparent that Britain had an overwhelming advantage, and this situation has been obscured in many accounts of the campaign. Archibald Wavell gives the Turkish forces at the third battle of Gaza as 40-45,000 rifles, 1,500 sabres and 300 guns.[89] The *Official History* lowers this to 33,000 rifles, and as the E.E.F. could field some 60-75,000 rifles and 12-17,000 sabres, odds of two-to-one are created.[90] This gives the impression of rather even odds as given the inherent advantage of the defence the Turks' defensive position seemed stronger than was actually the case.

Looking at the other side of the hill it soon becomes apparent that the Turks were, in fact, in a weak position. Kress von Kressenstein gives his rifle strength as 23,000, with divisions such as the 54th down to 1,500. Many regiments — a Turkish division was nominally made up of nine battalions in three regiments — were down to under 500 rifles, and with a running sick rate of 3-4,000, 25 per cent. of the total force was usually in hospital.[91] The medical services seem to have lacked most of the basics required for rehabilitating soldiers, including shortages of anaesthetics.[92] Hussein Husni gives average divisional rifle strengths in Palestine as 3,000: 'that is to say about 21,000 along the whole front.'[93]

Focusing on XXII Corps defending Gaza, the figures come down further, as one looks at its three divisions (see map 5). The Official History written by

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[86]*Ibid.*, p 178 & Milner papers, V C/363, 'Situation in Turkey', report by Robertson, 15 Nov.1917, pp 2-3.
[87]Milner papers, III/B/140, CIGS to Allenby, 2 Jan.1918.
[88]L/MIL/5/735, 'Report of an inhabitant of Athlit, Mt.Carmel, Syria', [Nov.1916?], p.9. For Greeks in the army see *Arab Bulletin*, report no.17, 30 Aug.1916, p.196.
[89]Wavell, *The Palestine Campaigns* (1933) p.115.
[90]*Ibid.*, pp.112-113 & *Official History*, vol.ii, pp.35, 42-43.
[91]'Notes on Foreign War Books', *The Army Quarterly*, April 1922, p.159 for 23,000. Von Kressenstein, *art.cit (RUSI)*, p 510 gives 140,000 in the EEF (p.508 for hospital figures).
[92]P.Long, *Other Ranks of Kut* (1938) p.174.
[93]Hussein Husni, *Yilderim*, part 1, ch.4.

Cyril Falls gives respective rifle strengths for the 53rd, 3rd and 7th divisions of 3,100, 3,698 and 2,886. Cyril Falls, it seems, took these figures from appendix 14 of Hussein Husni's *Yilderim*. What is omitted is that the 53rd Division holding the line next to the sea was only 66.5 per cent. Turkish, and the Arabs who made up the balance, were seen as most unreliable. While the 3rd Division was 84 per cent. Turkish, the 7th Division, which seems to have been something of a reserve, had a rifle strength of under 3,000.[94] Also, the 54th Division of XX Corps, positioned some five miles east of Gaza, which was the next unit in line after the 3rd Division, was under strength at 2,738 (or only 1,500 according to von Kressenstein's account).[95]

Henry Gullett's notes indicate that Allenby on 28 November 1917 believed the Turkish force to be 41,000. This seems to be a highly inflated figure, and one wonders what would have happened if the considerable strength of the E.E.F. had been used against the two weak divisions defending Gaza.[96] In the Marquess of Anglesey's just published *History of the British Cavalry* volume on the Palestine campaign he writes that criticism by Liddell Hart of the Beersheba attack is, 'purely conjectural and is typical, perhaps, of Liddell Hart's unhappy, unscholarly habit of asserting what can never be proved'.[97] This chapter has tried to introduce some 'proof' that the Beersheba attack probably was the worst plan available. There were reasons for making the attack on Beersheba, not least the 'general repugnance in many minds for another assault after the two earlier repulses' at Gaza.[98] But understandable as the Beersheba attack may have been, it does not mean that the historian has to accept it uncritically as the only option available to the British. Colonel Clive Garsia spoke to von Kressenstein after the war and wrote to Maj.-Gen. Hare (of the 54th Division) how he, 'could not quite get' von Kressenstein to 'admit that with one more division we would have walked straight through his Gaza front; but you and I know that this would have been the case'.[99]

The state of the Turkish railway system supports the idea that the Turks had difficulty maintaining any substantial force in Palestine for either defensive or offensive operations. The *Australian Official History* recorded that the Palestine campaign was, 'to a decisive degree a struggle between the efficiency of two great systems of communications'.[100] While the E.E.F. built up a large and

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[94]*Official History*, vol.ii, pp.42-43.
[95]Kressenstein, *art.cit.*, p.511.
[96]Gullett papers, AWM40/45, Allenby to WO, 28 Nov.[1917].
[97]*A History of the British Cavalry 1816-1919, Volume 5, Egypt, Palestine and Syria, 1914-1919* (1994) p.141.
[98]*Ibid.*
[99]Hare papers, 66/85/1, '3rd Gaza folder', Garsia to Hare, 8 June 1920.
[100]*AOH*, p 27. See also E Ludendorff, *My War Memories* (1920) vol.i, p.175.

effective base at Kantara on the Suez Canal, able to take the largest ships, the Turks relied on a tortuous 1,275 mile railway stretching back to Haidar Pasha on the Bosphorous. Not only did the Turks' railway have a break from standard gauge at Rayak (in Lebanon), but tunnels through the Amanus and Taurus mountains were not completed until late-1918. Before 9 October 1918, when the first through train ran, all *matériel* had to be taken laboriously over two mountain ranges in trucks or on narrow gauge lines. Thus, any goods going to the Palestine front had to be loaded on and off the train five times.[101]

Turkey had little domestic coal so her locomotives had to run on less efficient substitutes such as wood (including Lebanon's cedar trees), olive and orange trees, and even camel dung.[102] The run-down state of the line was made worse by the precedence given to special de luxe trains carrying senior officers that held up all other traffic.[103] Ahmed Emin's study, *Turkey in the World War* (1930), shows that not only was the railway system falling apart, but so was the whole Turkish economy due to the demands of the war. The deportations and killings of Armenians from 1915 only made matters worse for the Turks as the Armenians had provided much of the skilled labour used on the limited railroad system.[104]

In Syria itself, Turco-German friction made a unified command system almost unworkable. Turkish *amour-propre*, and perceived German arrogance, created a tense situation between the two allies.[105] Djemal Pasha was most resentful of the fact that he was not in charge of the *Yilderim* force, and hence he obstructed the front line units. This difficult situation was commented on by von Papen who observed how the Germans had the powerful figure of Djemal Pasha, 'sitting resentfully in Damascus in control of all our lines of communication'.[106]

A further factor militating against the *Yilderim* force being a real threat to the E.E.F. was the huge explosion in September 1917 at Haidar Pasha rail station on the Bosphorous. Wilfred Castle dates the explosion to the 23rd, and asserts that some 1,000 people died.[107] Whether this was as a result of the actions of British agents, or, as seems more likely, simply hasty handling of ordnance, is not

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[101]The Turkish drive on Baku had even worse logistics (see R.de Nogales, *Four Years Beneath the Crescent* (1926) ch.3).

[102]*Arab Bulletin*, report no 18, 5 Sept.1916, p.210 and P.Kinross, *Ataturk: The Rebirth of a Nation* (1993) p.104.

[103]Falls, *art.cit.*, pp.277-278 & Chetwode papers, PP/MCR/C1, folder 6, 'Translation of Turkish Document (5/2/18) "Memorandum for the Journey Constantinople-Aleppo".'

[104]Weber, *Eagles on Crescent*, pp.144-5 and Trumpener in Neilson & Prete (eds), p.46.

[105]Herbert papers, DD/DRU section 56, 'Correspondence with Talaat Pasha in 1921'; Dawnay papers, 69/21/2, 'From an intelligent Jew resident in Jerusalem who left that town on the 13th [Nov.?] instant'; J Reed, *War in Eastern Europe* (1994) pp.118, 135-9.

[106]Von Papen, *Memoirs*, p.72. See also L.von Sanders, *Five Years*, p.181.

[107]Castle, *Grand Turk* (1943) p.102.

as important as its effects.[108] Allenby, writing to his wife, while recognising the delay this destruction of *matériel* caused, underestimated the damage done.[109] Simon-Eberhard, training with the German force at Neuhammer, remembers how the news of the explosion was 'devastating', and meant that the force would be unable to recapture Baghdad as all the, 'petrol, oil, lubricating oil; also shells, bombs, aeroplanes and rolling stock were destroyed'.[110]

Desertion within Turkey's armies also lends weight to the argument that by attacking Gaza the E.E.F. could have dealt a decisive blow to the Turks, and having done this could have established themselves in Palestine with little fear of the *Yilderim* force. In December 1917 von Sanders estimated there were 300,000 deserters, and it says something for the stamina of those that remained that they held on as they did.[111] The usual thing was that the soldiers would desert while in transit for the front, while those that did finally arrive were often in poor health. Mustafa Kemal, the commander of the Seventh Army, reported to Enver Pasha on 30 September 1917 that 50 per cent. of the 54th Division were either too young or old; a battalion of one of the best divisions left Istanbul 1,000 strong, only to arrive at Aleppo with 500 men.[112] Emin concurs with this view that the best organised divisions lost half their men before they reached the front, and while the British seem to have been aware to some extent of the Turks' situation, they did not realise all the implications.[113]

If the Turkish forces were as weak as these reports indicate, it would seem that Allenby made a tactical error adopting Chetwode's plan for assaulting Beersheba. In defence of Allenby it is worth taking into account the condition of the E.E.F. after Murray's departure. The two defeats in the spring made the third attempt a necessarily careful one, as the E.E.F. could not afford another setback. It must have seemed at the time that having failed twice against Gaza a new approach was needed. In fact, looking back on the Beersheba attack with the evidence of today, it is noteworthy that this plan was probably the most risky one. It was certainly a stroke of luck that the water supply at Beersheba was taken intact.

General Allenby himself was in a difficult position in that any reverse would have jeopardised his own position. Norman Macdonnell, a Canadian

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[108]Cruttwell *Great War*, p.613; von Sanders *Five Years*, p.184 & Wavell, *Palestine Campaigns*, p.110 all ascribe the explosion to British agents. For a projectile being dropped see Milner papers, V/C/363, Townley [or Milner] to Harding, 21 Oct.1917.

[109]Allenby papers, 1/8/15, letter to wife, 3 Oct.1917.

[110]Edmonds papers, V/4/1/1, review of *Mit dem AsienKorps zur Palästinafront* by Hauptmann Simon-Eberhard, 5 Jan.1928.

[111]Von Sanders, pp.190-191. For stamina see H.Kannengiesser, *The Campaign in Gallipoli* (1928) pp.146-149.

[112]Hussein Husni, *Yilderim*, part 1, ch.4. See also appendix 16.

[113]Emin, *Turkey in War*, p.263. Awareness see L/P&S/11/128:P4201/1917, 8 Oct.1917.

observer with the E.E.F., noted that Allenby, 'showed a good deal of the metal of which he is made when he refused to move until he was supplied as completely as he thought necessary'.[114] Allenby's task at the third battle of Gaza seems less difficult in retrospect. It is easy to be judgemental with the retrospective certainty of hindsight, but this overlooks the partial evidence available to Allenby, and leaves out the pressures on the new commander.

That Allenby had to delay his attack was not really his fault. Anglo-French difficulties, coupled with the dispute over strategy between Lloyd George and Robertson, circumscribed the actions of a new commander who had to build on the failures of his predecessor. Murray's defeats in the spring of 1917 and his subsequent dismissal put pressure on Allenby to succeed, and do so quickly, and with an army which was 'psychologically fragile' following two defeats.[115] Allenby also had to spend time reorganising Murray's staff officers, including replacing Lynden-Bell, Murray's Chief of General Staff. The troops of the E.E.F., in consequence, were caught in the winter rains from November 1917 before they could capture Jerusalem. The rains 'blotted out everything', turning the fine soil of the coastal plain into a quagmire.[116] Because of the weather the infantry of XX Corps had to replace the cold and exhausted troops of XXI Corps to effect the eventual fall of Jerusalem. This served to prolong the fighting to take Jerusalem.

The rainfall which impeded the E.E.F.s advance in November-December 1917 was not out of the ordinary, and the typical winter rains in Palestine are even mentioned in the Bible.[117] Figures supplied from Israel to this author show rainfall in 1917 to have followed the usual pattern of increasingly heavy showers from November, with January the coldest and wettest month.[118] The difficulty for Allenby was that he had to attack to get Jerusalem for Christmas, and he had no option but to fight in the rain. It seems rather one-sided to argue that Allenby was to blame for all this as he attacked as soon as he had carried out the necessary re-organisation of the E.E.F. and this took him to late-October 1917.

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[114]N.Macdonnell, 'The British Campaign in Palestine', *Transactions of the Canadian Military Institute*, 1923, p.47.

[115]Expression used by J.D.Grainger in 'Subtlety, Misdirection, and Deceit: Allenby's Grand Tactics at Third Gaza', *The RUSI Journal*, April 1995, p.59.

[116]*Anon.*, 'Palestine Reminiscences', *The Royal Air Force Quarterly*, October 1934, p.411. G Barrow (GOC of Yeomanry) in *The Fire of Life* (1942) pp.173-174 describes the rain.

[117]Deuteronomy.xi.14 & Zechariah.x.1 (apparently Allenby was very familiar with the Bible).

[118]For Nov.-Dec.1917 22mm & 94mm fell at Jerusalem and 16mm & 170mm at Jaffa (figures sent to author from Amos Carmeli of the Israeli Weizmann Institute of Science). See also E.Orni & E.Efrat, *Geography of Israel* (1976) p.136.

By concentrating on a critical analysis of the tactics adopted at the third battle of Gaza the non-military dimension to Allenby's operations, discussed at the end of Chapter One, can be overlooked. This is not satisfactory as this thesis aims to relate military operations to possible political and imperial benefits which would result from battlefield success. Also, by concentrating on military affairs Allenby's part in the campaign is not explored fully. Allenby was an adept general in dealing with issues that were not primarily military; considering his own martial background, his skill at dealing with the politics of war is impressive. More especially from September 1918, but also before, Allenby was having to take into account politicians' concerns, and implement policies with which he did not necessarily agree. These political duties, which centred on establishing a British administration in Palestine and an Arab one in Syria, were an additional task for Allenby. It is with the Palestine campaign in the round that Allenby's stature and presence comes to the fore, and to draw a simple analogy with Murray is to miss the point.

In March 1919, in his post-war negotiations with the French, Lloyd George asserted that he 'had begged the French to coöperate' in the Palestine campaign in 1917.[119] In fact, the exact opposite was the situation that pertained in late-1917 as Allenby's forces moved into Palestine proper. Once the Constantinople agreements of 1915 had given Russia the Straits, and once Britain had decided on a Palestine offensive, Britain and France had to delimit their desiderata in the Middle East. The Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 was the attempt to define respective areas, and for Elie Kedourie it, 'was worded precisely so as not to conflict — rather so as exactly to fit in — with "our pledges to the Arabs". As for the embarrassment which arose in 1918-19, it was occasioned not by conflicting pledges but by Lloyd George's determination to disown the Sykes-Picot agreement.'[120]

The 'pledges to the Arabs' referred to came in a series of letters between Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner in Cairo to December 1916, and Sherif Hussain of the Hejaz.[121] Britain seems to have encouraged the Arab Revolt from 1916 partly as a war-time measure, and partly to help provide for Britain's needs after the war.[122] That Hussein and the Arabs could be of value in more than just military terms seems to have increasingly been the dominant factor

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[119]R.Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement* (1923) vol.i, p.74 & Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference* (1939) vol.ii, p.687.

[120]E.Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth: The McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and Its Interpretations 1914-1939* (1976) p.312.

[121]Copies of the letters are in G.Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (1945) appendix A (also copies in FO371/4185/153432).

[122]Yale papers, box 1: file 2, report no.2, 'The Arabia and Hedjaz Situation', 5 Nov.1917, p.16 & Kedourie, *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire 1914-1921* (1987) ch.2 (also Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, pp.52-53).

in keeping the Revolt going. The diplomatic side of the negotiations from 1915 has generated some considerable argument, essentially over whether the British deceived the Arabs, and acted in a duplicitous fashion.[123]

Part of the aim of this thesis is to examine the role of the E.E.F. in relation to events after the armistice. Kedourie points out that Lloyd George's aim was to 'disown' the Sykes-Picot agreement. The culmination of the E.E.F. campaign came with the fall of Damascus, and the politics of its capture, whereby the Arabs were permitted to occupy the city, bears out the view that Lloyd George, and the War Cabinet, saw the 1916 agreement with the French as an impediment. Britain wanted to restrict French designs on Syria, and also make sure that Palestine would be a British preserve. Any success by Allenby's force was going to do little to assist the French who would have, 'preferred the *status quo ante* in Western Asia to the prospect of Britain emerging as the dominant power there'.[124] Colonel Brémond, with the French mission in the Hedjaz, was candid about the fact that he would prefer for the Arab Revolt to fail.[125] Brémond felt this way because he knew that the Arab Revolt was more than just a movement to help defeat the Turks.

Under the Sykes-Picot agreement a joint political mission was to administer Palestine. Before the third battle of Gaza the British had successfully limited the French contingent (the *Détachement Français de Palestine et Syrie*) in the E.E.F. to a token force of some 3,000 men.[126] Indeed, when the French, mindful of their weak position in the E.E.F., sent a full general — Bailloud — to command their two battalions, Roberston was told to protest at someone so senior in rank being sent.[127] Robertson wrote to Lloyd George that Britain would have to put up with a small French contingent, and an 'old General', but, 'we must oppose any joint expedition'.[128] With the capture of Jerusalem restricting the size of the *D.F.P.S.* would not suffice to exclude the French who sought joint political administration under the terms of the Sykes-Picot treaty.

With Allenby's advance to Jerusalem France and Britain had to deal with the political problem of who was to administer Palestine. François Georges Picot, as the head of the French mission in Palestine, attempted to assert his control with Allenby at a meal following Jerusalem's fall. The result is amusingly recounted by T.E. Lawrence who was present and remembered how when Picot

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[123]Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth* (1976) deals with this issue.
[124]Friedman, *Question of Palestine*, p.218.
[125]FO141/671/4417, 'France & Hijaz 1917-26', report to Wingate [?], 10 Feb.1917.
[126]CAB23/2/116(13), 10 Apr.1917 & I.Friedman, *The Question of Palestine, 1914-1918, British-Jewish-Arab Relations* (1973) p.136.
[127]CAB/23/2/119(13), 16 Apr.1917. Bailloud, however, had not impressed Hankey (see S.Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets* (1970) vol.i, p.195).
[128]Robertson papers, I/19/12b, CIGS to Lloyd George, 10 Apr.1917.

told Allenby that he would take over the civil government of Jerusalem, 'a silence followed' as 'salad, chicken mayonnaise, and foie gras sandwiches hung in our wet mouths unmunched'. For a moment Allenby's entourage thought that their, 'idol might betray a frailty. But his [Allenby] face grew red: he swallowed, his chin coming forward...whilst he said grimly, "In the military zone the only authority is that of the Commander-in-Chief — myself."' Allenby's intransigence forced Picot to protest: '"But Sir Grey, Sir Edward Grey"...He was cut short. "Sir Edward Grey referred to the civil government which will be established when I judge that the military situation permits".'[129]

It would seem Lawrence's account was not apocryphal, as Chetwode remembered the incident when he wrote to Wavell in 1939: 'I wish to goodness you could put in what the Frenchmen said to Allenby and what Allenby said to him, when the Frenchman said he was going to take over the civil administration of Jerusalem at once. However, that, of course, can never appear in a book.'[130] Allenby himself wrote to Robertson that Picot was a 'pleasant fellow', but, 'came out with the idea that he would have a share in the administration, and does not like his present position'.[131] Allenby's restrictions on French rule matched up with the need to exclude France from Palestine, although it should also be emphasised that Allenby would not have wanted political problems to bedevil military matters behind his front line with a joint administration straddling his rear echelons.

Evidence from Brig.-Gen. Gilbert Clayton, Allenby's Chief Political Officer, backs up the view that once the E.E.F. pushed forward, it was often dealing with political matters as much as military ones. This is to portend events from late-1918, but already at the third battle of Gaza Allenby's campaign was being used to alter the Sykes-Picot agreement. Clayton was most explicit about the fact that military occupation was to be used to confront the French with a 'fait accompli'.[132] Clayton quickly established a military administration (Occupied Enemy Territory Administration — O.E.T.A.) to exclude the French. This was also the policy after the battle of Megiddo in September 1918 when an O.E.T.A. administration was set up in northern Palestine; this was allied to Prince Feisal receiving British assistance to set up a Hashemite régime in Syria. Writing about the period following Megiddo, and the role of the Arab Bureau, Bruce Westrate comments: 'Allenby's vice-consuls ensconced themselves in every major Levantine city (even those in the French sphere) and were backed up by a

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[129]Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (Penguin 1962), p.464.
[130]Allenby papers, 6/VIII/31, Chetwode to Wavell, 17 Feb.1939.
[131]Robertson papers, I/21/84c, Allenby to Robertson, 25 Jan.1918.
[132]Clayton papers, 693/13/10-12, Clayton to Bell, 8 Dec.1917. 124.

military colossus of over two hundred thousand men'.[133] This was the substantial imperial and political dimension with which Allenby had to contend.

This policy was already being followed, albeit on a more humble scale, following the third battle of Gaza. Clayton, writing to Gertrude Bell, was explicit about the 'tiresome proposals' of the French, and that a military administration under Allenby had been planned to deal with the French.[134] When Picot, understandably, was not altogether pleased with his exclusion, Clayton maintained that the, 'only thing is to maintain the military facade as long as possible.'[135] In October 1917, before the E.E.F. had advanced, Clayton was writing to Wingate about how: 'unless they [military administrators] have a ready made and cut-and-dried system before they advance, they will find themselves faced with many political difficulties with our Allies'.[136] Clayton went on to propose that Allenby insist on a military occupation force as the only way of keeping order, and this Allenby did at his meal with Picot.[137] Thus, military expediency was to be used to balk the French. Robertson wrote to Allenby on 26 November 1917 and pointed out that while Picot was 'discontented', Allenby should, 'not entertain any ideas of joint administration'.[138]

While space restricts analysis of the Balfour Declaration, published in *The Times* on 9 November 1917, Zionism was also a means of providing for a British Palestine.[139] Not only was Zionism a help in furthering the Entente war-effort, but for Britain it allowed her to reinforce her hold over Palestine: 'the Balfour Declaration...sought to use Zionism as a bridgehead for British interests in the Middle East'.[140] The Zionist Commission, which went out to Palestine in the spring of 1918, was given 'full support' by the British government, although the Zionists claimed that pro-Arab O.E.T.A. administrators under Allenby obstructed them.[141] Military occupation, added to Zionism and support for the Hashemites, was to become a powerful means whereby Britain could negate her obligations to France as embodied in the Sykes-Picot agreement.

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[133]Westrate, *The Arab Bureau: British Policy in the Middle East 1916-20* (1993) p.169

[134]Clayton papers, 693/13/10-12, Clayton to Bell, 8 Dec.1917.

[135]Clayton papers, 693/13/27-30, Clayton to Wingate, 5 [6?] Jan.1918 (see also 693/14/1-5, Weizmann to Sokolow, 17 July 1918).

[136]Wingate papers, 146/6/68-69, Clayton to Wingate, 12 Oct.1917.

[137]*Ibid.*

[138]WO33/946, CIGS to Allenby, 26 Nov.1917.

[139]Readers interested in an introduction to the declaration might care to consult L.Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (1961).

[140]J.Turner, *Lloyd George's Secretariat* (1980) p.79. See also M.Beloff, *Britain's Liberal Empire 1897-1921* (1969) p.262.

[141]Quote D Barzilay & B Litvinoff (eds), *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* (1977) vol viii, series A, pp.xi-xii, 66-67 (see also N.Bentwich, England in Palestine (1932) p.25). See M.Cocker, *Richard Meinertzhagen* (1989) pp.130-138 for pro-Arab bias.

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Allenby, as the commander in Palestine, was heavily involved in these non-military activities. Criticism of Allenby's command is tempered if one turns the tables to see whether the statesmen could fulfil their political tasks, and also plan and win battles for which they had had no training. With the third battle of Gaza it can be seen how civil-military relations in London, the actions of Allenby and the E.E.F. out in Palestine, and Britain's regard for her imperial standing, were all inter-connected. Sometimes, as with the squabbling in London between Robertson and Lloyd George, circumstances had a detrimental effect on Britain's war-effort and made Allenby's task more difficult. Allenby himself was probably wrong to attack Beersheba, and by doing so he dissipated the considerable strength of his army, and prolonged not only the third battle of Gaza, but also the occupation of Palestine. However, at other times Britain acted more thoughtfully, and her use of the E.E.F., and the Arab Revolt, to secure her position in the Middle East seems to have been a more far-sighted policy.

CHAPTER THREE: THE SUPREME WAR COUNCIL AND GENERAL SMUTS' MISSION: PLANNING FOR 1918.

> On 18 February Robertson read in the morning papers that he had resigned. He was given the command in eastern England — a good joke at the expense of an uncompromising 'westerner'. (A.J.P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945* (1983) p.140.)

This chapter will follow the dispute between Lloyd George and Robertson to March 1918. On 1 February 1918 the Supreme War Council accepted Joint Note 12 that proposed a decisive offensive effort against Turkey, with a defensive role to be adopted in France.[1] Lloyd George then sent General Jan Smuts on a mission to Egypt, and on 1 March 1918 he submitted his report on how Allenby's campaign should be pursued to put into effect the conclusions of Joint Note 12. Chapter Four will deal with Allenby's response to the call for a renewed offensive. This came with the two raids by the E.E.F. across the River Jordan between March and May 1918. These raids bring to our attention the role of the Arabs, and in doing so introduce the non-military dimension of the E.E.F.s campaign, which is the main concern of the second part of this thesis.

By the close of this chapter the argument over civil-military relations, in terms of its bearing on Britain's war-effort, will be concluded. Namely, is it fair to say that Robertson and the General Staff acted in a disingenuous fashion? Or were the military providing accurate assessments of the difficulties that an attack on Turkey through Palestine posed, especially considering the paucity of information that they had on what the Turks were planning?

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From before Jerusalem's fall Lloyd George kept up the pressure on Robertson so that the momentum of the Palestine offensive would not be lost. Through Robertson the Prime Minister urged Allenby to attack in Palestine. This was evidenced by a series of telegrams, notably in December 1917, one of which was quoted in Chapter One as possible evidence of Allenby's collusion to deceive the Prime Minister. Looking at the three-way correspondence between Allenby, Robertson and Lloyd George, one sees that the criticism that the military were deliberately deceitful to Lloyd George is not justified. Writing to Allenby on 14 December 1917 Robertson said how he did not want to influence Allenby 'in any way', adding how Allenby 'must carry out the policy assigned' to him, more especially

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[1]'Joint Note 12 Submitted to the Supreme War Council by its Military Representatives', 21 Jan.1918. Copies in *History of the Great War, Belgium and France, 1918, Appendices* (1935) appendix 9, para 19; WO106/729 & CAB25/68 (by H.Wilson dated 19 Jan.1918).

as some of the War Cabinet, 'seem to think that we deliberately over-rated the enemy's power of resistance in order to knock out the project entirely. I am sure no such idea ever entered your mind as it never entered mine.'[2] The tenor of this letter is that of Robertson trying genuinely to deal with urgent matters, and to see a conspiracy is to read into Robertson's explicit statements to Allenby the opposite meaning to that written.

The estimates given by Robertson were not terribly accurate on Turkish intentions and capabilities. However, there were reasons for this, and Robertson strongly defended his actions to the War Cabinet on 14 December pointing to the chances which Allenby had run, and with which the General Staff had had to deal.

Robertson pointed out to the War Cabinet that no, 'General Staff and no General would have been justified in basing a plan of campaign upon chances of this nature [finding Beersheba's water supply intact]. Had they done so, and had the campaign failed, they would have been justly condemned.'[3] Two days earlier, Frederick Maurice, the Director of Military Operations, informed the War Cabinet that while the Turkish forces facing Allenby were weaker than expected, this was because in, 'Syria there was no system of Secret Service possible, comparable with that on the western front, because, owing to the nature of the country, we could not get information before it was too stale to be of use'.[4] C. Ernest Dawn supports Maurice arguing that British espionage in Syria was 'spectacularly unsuccessful' as the Ottoman authorities, 'very early arrested Cairo's agents in Turkey and very effectively prevented British espionage thereafter'.[5] It was Britain's intelligence lapse on Turkish numbers and intentions that was the source of the General Staff's wariness, not their being dishonest.

In his autobiography, Robertson complained that 20 per cent. of the time of the General Staff in 1917 was spent assessing peripheral operations.[6] The energy spent arguing about the Palestine campaign should be measured against the intense fighting in France in 1917. Any accusation that time was wasted is a serious one. Robertson seems not to have realised the value of the capture of Jerusalem to a national war-effort. But Lloyd George's continued desire — one might even say obsession — for a campaign in Palestine is harder to make sense of once Jerusalem had fallen. With the holy city of Jerusalem in Allied hands, Robertson's attempts to restrict peripheral campaigns are more comprehensible. More so as the General Staff were aware that with Russia's collapse German divisions were moving westward, and as they repeatedly pointed out to Lloyd

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[2]WO106/718, Robertson to Allenby, 14 Dec.1917, p.2 (see p.4 for similar comments).
[3]CAB24/GT2991, Robertson to Sec. WC, 14 Dec.1917, p.3.
[4]CAB23/4/296, 12 Dec.1917, p.4.
[5]Ernest Dawn, 'The Influence of T.E.Lawrence on the Middle East', in J.Meyers (ed), *T.E.Lawrence: Soldier, Writer, Legend* (1989) p.63.
[6]Robertson, *From Private to Field Marshal* (1921) p.319.

George these reinforcements would be used in France.[7] The Entente's position was made weaker by the need to stiffen the Italian front with an Anglo-French force following Italy's defeat at the battle of Caporetto. For the General Staff it was clear, 'that the bulk of the German forces still in the East would be brought across to the Western Front during the winter, and that an all-out offensive would be launched as soon as conditions permitted'.[8] When the first German offensive was launched in March the British Third and Fifth Armies held on, 'by their fingernails and "with their backs to the wall"...after a confused and disorderly retreat.'[9] This state of affairs shows the accuracy of the General Staff's predictions on German plans following the collapse of Russia.

The occupation of territory in the Middle East was to give Britain strength at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. This benefit must be measured against more immediate concerns in late-1917, and early-1918. This difficulty Robertson saw, and in 1927 he wrote of the value of the eastern strategy, but also of the fact that the Ludendorff offensives were impending and needed to be dealt with first: 'We looked sufficiently foolish as it was in March 1918, but would have looked far more foolish had we fully followed the advice of the Easterners.'[10]

It was also the case that from 1912 Britain had assured France that she had no interest in occupying Syria.[11] The contention here is that Britain tried to use the Hashemites as a proxy for a form of British control. This plan was, however, not an easy one to implement, and was to rely on an ally of doubtful military value, and doubtful political cohesion. This must be set against the might of the German army preparing to attack in France. If all Britain intended to occupy herself was Palestine, it is difficult to make sense of the continued involvement in a Palestine campaign once Jerusalem had fallen. Of course, one can point to the ease with which the Turkish front collapsed in September 1918 at Megiddo as evidence that if Allenby had had more drive, and encouragement from Robertson, this could have been achieved earlier in 1918.

This ignores the reality that the Ludendorff offensives stripped Allenby of all his best troops. Thus as Allenby was engaged in battle he would have been asked to give up units to deal with the German threat in France. Also, the weakening of the Turkish war capability was a gradual process, and by late-

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[7]The Ludendorff offensive of March 1918 came close to dividing the Anglo-French front, and with three (or four including an attack in June) subsequent attacks to July 1918 the Allies were forced on the defensive (see M. Middlebrook, *The Kaiser's Battle: 21 March 1918* (1983) p.346 and book review in *The Times Literary Supplement* (13 May 1994, p.4, col.5) by J. Keegan).

[8]Kirke papers, vol.vii, p.6.

[9]Bidwell & Graham, *Coalitions, Politicians & Generals* (1993) p.121.

[10]Robertson papers (at BL), Add.Mss.46393 f.132, Robertson to Spender, 12 Apr.1927. See also J.Connell, *Wavell: Soldier and Scholar* (1964) pp.133-134.

[11]Point made in Lloyd George papers, F/52/3/15, Grahame to Davies, 3 June 1919.

1918, with the increasing Turkish irruption into the Caucasus, their Palestine front was that much more depleted. That a drive to Aleppo — 350 miles from Jerusalem — would not endanger the core of Ottoman economic and political activity based around Istanbul was pointed out in papers by British military representatives in the Supreme War Council, but seems not to have influenced Lloyd George's plans.[12] The report on 'Probable Enemy Action' in July 1918 accurately stated how the, 'loss of DAMASCUS or ALEPPO would have a serious moral effect on the Turks, but neither of these places nor MOSUL are, strategically speaking, of very great importance to the cause of the Central Powers'. This view was further supported in the 'Proposed Joint Note' later in July 1918:-

> In Palestine no definite or adequate objective offers itself. Even if it were possible to seize ALEPPO it would not be worthwhile to use up any considerable resources for the importance of the place has dwindled to comparatively small proportions in consequence of the new lines of communication now available for the Turkish Army by the Black Sea to Caucasia. The centre of gravity of the Middle East is now between BAGHDAD and the CASPIAN SEA and the importance of the operations in PALESTINE has decreased.[13]

At the battle of Megiddo in September 1918 the E.E.F. did advance to Aleppo, but this was not what caused the Turks to surrender on 30 October 1918. The Allied army at Salonika had attacked on 15 September, and the Central powers' front quickly collapsed. This was more threatening to Istanbul than Allenby's attack in Palestine. In turn, the Central powers' collapse in Salonika and Palestine related very much to the retreat of the German army in France.

With the 'black day' of 8 August 1918, the British Expeditionary Force, Americans, and French kept up an unrelenting pressure on the German forces in France, leading to the defeat of Germany, and an armistice on 11 November 1918.[14] The Turks were not foolish, and were very much aware of their reliance on the fate of Germany, the strongest power in their alliance. The role of Bulgaria was also pivotal, in that with her collapse Turkey's land route to Germany was severed. The impact of Bulgaria's surrender on Turkey following the battle of Megiddo was remarked on by Cyril Falls who argued that while Turkey had been defeated in Palestine, 'it was the collapse of Bulgaria that induced her to sue for

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[12]CAB25/78, 'Probable enemy action in the Balkans & Turkey', Brig-Gen H.Waters, GS, 22 July 1918, p.3 & CAB25/84, 'Proposed Joint Note', from British Military Representatives, 31 July 1918, p.5.

[13]*Ibid.* (CAB25/84).

[14]For events in France see Liddell Hart, *History of the First World War* (1972). For a revisionist view of the war in France see D.Winter, *Haig's Command* (1991) chs.12-13.

peace'.[15] Bulgaria had surrendered on 26 September 1918, before the fall of Damascus, showing how events in Syria were marginal for affecting the decisions of the Ottoman government.[16]

With Germany's increasing collapse — from before Megiddo — the Turks saw that the end was near. To compare late-1917 with the autumn of 1918, is to compare two different situations. To assert that because Jerusalem's fall had had value, a continued offensive, *ipso facto*, would also be of value, is incorrect. Not only are there the aforementioned military factors to consider, but Damascus, or Beirut, or Aleppo, held no place in the hearts of the British populace. One can counter by pointing to the political value that would accrue to the British empire if the E.E.F. were to make substantial territorial gains. This is true, and Lloyd George used the E.E.F.s successes after the war, but this must be set against more pressing concerns while the war continued. Amery's imperial concerns, outlined in Chapter One, certainly linked in to Lloyd George's own awareness of empire, and of the need to have post-war negotiating assets.[17] However, it is not apparent that these were the only two reasons for the Prime Minister's interest in a Palestine campaign. Attention needs to be given to Lloyd George's opinion that an eastern offensive could win the war.

The question of how much Lloyd George was using Allenby's Palestine operations as a military means of winning the war, as opposed to the campaign's post-war usefulness, is a difficult one to answer. It would seem that the answer was a mixture of both. David Woodward remarks how Lloyd George was, 'interested in military operations against Turkey that furthered British imperial interests'.[18] This view is reinforced by Lloyd George's own comment in the War Cabinet on 21 February 1918 when he made clear Palestine's political value:-

> The Prime Minister said he would like to have the proposed campaign [Palestine] considered from a broader standpoint. If we imagined ourselves negotiating at the Peace Conference, what would be the value of our present position compared with our present position with Damascus added as a further pawn? Was it worth the sacrifice of two or three hundred thousand tons of shipping? We might find it possible if Damascus were in our possession to persuade the French to be content

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[15]Falls, *The First World War* (1960) p.372.

[16]*The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy 1793-1919, Vol.III, 1866-1919* (1923) (eds A.W.Ward & G.P.Gooch) p.524 gives 26 September as the date of Bulgaria's surrender; J.Edmonds, *A Short History of World War I* (1951) p.369 says it was the 29th: both dates precede Damascus's fall.

[17]For a further synopsis of Amery's imperial focus see Kedourie's review of Hancock & van der Poel's *Selections from the Smuts Papers* in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Oct.1967, pp.113-114 (see also Lloyd George papers, F/2/1/31, Amery to PM, 19 Oct.1918 & *ibid.*(b), pp.2-3).

[18]Woodward (ed), *The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir William Robertson* (1989) p.334.

> with something less than the whole of Alsace-Lorraine in return for compensation in Syria. Fortunately the party in France which was most eager to recover Alsace-Lorraine was also eager to extend French influence in Syria.[19]

This must be set against Lloyd George's particular view on the war, and how he saw in Palestine a means of compensating for, and even preventing, the attritional battles in France. The British losses at the battle of Passchendaele in 1917 had very much concentrated Lloyd George's attention, and he hoped to keep troops from Haig to restrict his offensive capability. However, that there were large British casualties on the Western front, did not mean Robertson's calculations were erroneous. With a German offensive impending, Britain simply did not have enough men to have both a 'western' and 'eastern' strategy. Robertson pointed out to the War Cabinet, on 26 December, the need to concentrate resources in France, presciently adding that if a Palestine offensive were pursued there must be no delay.[20] Robertson added that it was, 'for serious consideration whether the advantages to be gained by an advance to Dan [a spring by Mount Hermon in northern Palestine] are worth the cost and risk involved'.[21] This is an exact assessment, and that Henry Wilson as C.I.G.S. continued Robertson's strategy indicates that the military were faithful in passing on information on the military situation.[22] Robertson and the General Staff certainly pushed their case robustly, and the evidence in Chapter One shows the military, on occasion, to be narrow minded in their analysis of Turkish strategy. However, David Woodward's argument that Lloyd George was the victim of military duplicity seems overstated, and Woodward's emotive comments on the dispute between Robertson and Lloyd George in late-1917 serve to mislead and focus attention away from what were the essential strategical problems for Britain.[23]

While the war continued Lloyd George's interest in the Middle East seems primarily to have been for how Allenby's operations could favourably influence the war as a whole. This changed with the war's end when the E.E.F.s successes could be used to strengthen Britain's hand at the peace negotiations. British officers within the E.E.F. and the Arab Bureau kept the Hashemite armies supplied and in the field. The ultimate success of the Hashemites in gaining control in Syria gave Britain added strength at the Paris Peace Conference.

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[19]Curzon papers, MssEur F112/132, PM to WC 351A, 21 Feb.1918, p.1.
[20]CAB24/GT3112 & Robertson papers, I/16/9, 'Future Ops in Palestine', 26 Dec.1917, p.4.
[21]*Ibid.*, p.3.
[22]Barrow papers, 67/157/1, Robertson to Barrow, 16 May 1927 in which Robertson wrote that Wilson only had an easier time because the Ludendorff offensives gave the military the powers they needed. See also Kirke papers, vol.vii, p.6 in which Kirke says Wilson quickly adopted Robertson's plans when he became CIGS in February 1918.
[23]Woodward, *LG and the Generals*, chs.9-10 (especially pp.205-7). Woodward makes his case on the October assessments and does not consider Allenby's December divisional requests.

Military strategists like Robertson were moderate in seeing their war aim as the military defeat of Germany.[24] This can be contrasted with the view that Germany's defeat, and Britain's long-term survival, would only come about through a post-war emasculation of Germany and her threat to Britain and her colonies. Lloyd George's position seems to have been somewhere in the middle as he tried to balance these two camps, and Britain was, perhaps, fortunate in that the two strategies, in the long-term, complemented one another. Lloyd George's attempt, for whatever reason, to seek victory through a Palestine campaign was militarily flawed. As regards the 'frank imperialists' such as Curzon, Milner and Churchill, the evidence available today shows that their imperial aims should have been held in abeyance until the Ludendorff offensives had been dealt with.[25]

It remains in this chapter to analyse in more detail the period up to the spring of 1918, with particular attention to the idea that Lloyd George had strategic insight, but that this insight was stifled by those like Robertson whose focus was on the war in France. This examination will show that the Palestine campaign was going to do little to win the war, and thus supports Robertson's negative attitude to the campaign.

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Jerusalem's fall only served to excite further Lloyd George's hopes for a decisive offensive in Palestine. Rather than see the capture of Jerusalem as the successful outcome of a limited offensive with a specific objective, the Prime Minister viewed Allenby's victory as part of an ongoing campaign that would defeat the Central powers. The causal link between a Turkish defeat in Palestine, and victory in France, was, to say the least, tenuous, but this fact did not stop Lloyd George pressing for success in Palestine. The Prime Minister's inability to direct grand strategy as he wanted, coupled with the uplifting success of Jerusalem's capture, and the losses in France in 1917, combined to consolidate Lloyd George's focus on Allenby and the Palestine campaign.

While there were attempts by Lloyd George in November 1917 to enquire into the possibilities of maintaining the Palestine offensive, it was from 12 December, the day after Allenby triumphantly walked through the Jaffa Gate into Jerusalem, that the Prime Minister began the pressure that was to culminate in Joint Note 12 and Robertson's dismissal.[26] On 12 December Robertson wrote

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[24]See B.Hunt & A.Preston, in *War Aims and Strategic Policy in the Great War 1914-1918* (1977) p.31.

[25]Expression used by Michael Howard in *Studies in War and Peace* (1970) p.123.

[26]For November's correspondence see WO158/611, 16 & 17 Nov.1917; WO106/722, 'Resume of Operations in Palestine July 1917-Apr.1918', p.3 and Robertson papers, I/16/8a. For

to Allenby how the War Cabinet, 'would like to have your opinion...as soon as possible as to manner in which, and extent to which, it is possible to exploit your success in Palestine with forces now under your Command, plus the division under orders from Mesopotamia'.[27] The division alluded to was the 7th (Meerut) Indian Division, and it would seem that this infantry division had been under orders to move to Palestine from before Jerusalem's fall.

General Allenby replied on the 14th and gave a watchful assessment, seeing little possibility of any substantial advance before the summer of 1918. Allenby saw the restrictive effects of the winter rains, which were seriously to impede the Trans-Jordan raids, and proposed a gradual advance based on double-tracking his railway and pushing it up the coast. Allenby also hoped to operate against the Hedjaz railway supplying Medina, and this was the foundation of the Trans-Jordan raids in the spring of 1918. However, this reasoned assessment was not sufficient for the War Cabinet, and the C.I.G.S. had again to telegraph Allenby on the 18th to tell him that his political masters attached 'great importance to eliminating Turkey' and, therefore, wanted a project to deal with two possibilities: firstly, the occupation of Palestine up to the Dan spring; secondly, to advance to Aleppo and interdict the Turks' supply route to Mesopotamia.[28]

It was this request that prompted Allenby to reply on the 20 December that he would need, '16 or 18 divisions besides my mounted corps'.[29] This request, however, was for an advance to the line Damascus-Beirut and beyond. Considering that Turkey in late-1917 was still in the war, and being supported by Germany, it is the view of this author that Allenby's assessment was thoughtful, reasoned, and not fanciful. Also, Allenby said on the 20th that to occupy only Palestine was something that he could do by the summer with his existing force if Turkish opposition were under 60,000. When Allenby said to the C.I.G.S. that Aleppo was some 350 miles from his railhead, and its occupation no easy task, this was a reasonable comment, and not an example of his being misleading. Allenby also had the worry of any advance exposing his right flank, and looked to the Arabs as a partial means of securing this threat. Even with Arab help the E.E.F. would have had to provide garrison troops over the River Jordan if this area were secured and this would have been an added strain on the limited resources of Britain's expeditionary force.

December's correspondence see CAB24/37, appendix to GT3112; WO33/946 & Robertson papers, I/16/9d.

[27]12 Dec.1917 telegram also in CAB23/4/296(5). The CIGS implies that the 7th Division was under orders from before the 11th, unless its movement was decided in one day.

[28]CAB24/37/GT3112, appendix, CIGS to Allenby, 18 Dec.1917, p.6.

[29]*Ibid.*, Allenby to CIGS, 20 Dec.1917, p.7.

One needs to ask what might have happened to the E.E.F. forward units if they had advanced to Aleppo. They would have been confronted by Turkish forces weakened, but not at all defeated, and with Germany still as an ally. This Turco-German force, even if it were weak, would benefit greatly from a shortened logistical train. General William Marshall's force in Mesopotamia would have been unable to provide much assistance as it would have been denuded of troops to go to reinforce the E.E.F. effort.[30] Indeed, had Smuts' plan in the report he made following his visit to Palestine in February 1918 gone ahead the Mesopotamian force would have been left with only four infantry divisions.[31]

In October 1918, when the cavalry of the 5th Indian Division did occupy Aleppo, they did so with considerable difficulty, and were the only cavalry unit able to make the long march north from Damascus, as the other three cavalry divisions were too debilitated by malaria.[32] They were also facing an enemy weakened by the long summer, and the drain of the Caucasian offensive that was to culminate in Baku's capture by a Turkish-led 'Army of Islam' in September 1918.[33]

With regard to malaria, the anopheline species of mosquito that causes malaria would have been most prevalent in the summer of 1918 following the rainy season.[34] Therefore, if the E.E.F. had pushed deep into Turkish territory in early-1918 — and the lack of prophylactic measures by the Turks meant that malaria was rife behind their lines — the E.E.F. would have been badly affected by endemic malaria, which, even in late-1918, was to kill many soldiers who had survived the previous four years' fighting. In late-1918, the conditions behind the Turkish lines led to famines in Lebanon and Syria. The sufferings of the civilians would have been another problem for which the E.E.F. would have had to direct resources.

If Allenby had succeeded in advancing into northern Syria in early-1918, and then had lost his trained infantry force to Haig in France to deal with the Ludendorff offensives — which was precisely what did happen — the E.E.F. might have had to retreat. This would have had an adverse effect on home front morale, just when the B.E.F. and the French were themselves retreating on the

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[30]If Smuts' proposals had been implemented, two infantry divisions (including one British), one cavalry brigade (and a cavalry division from France) and artillery would have gone from the Mesopotamian force to the EEF (see *Official History*, vol.ii, p.298).

[31]*Ibid.* & for Smuts' report see CAB24/4/G199, 'Report by General Smuts on his Mission to Egypt', 1 Mar.1918, p.3.

[32]For casualties from malaria in 1918 see *Australian Official History*, pp.773, 780 and Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse* (1978) p.183.

[33]For Baku's fall see D.Fromkin, *A Peace To End All Peace: Creating The Modern Middle East 1914-22* (1991) pp.359-360 and L.Dunsterville, *The Adventures of Dunsterforce* (1920) ch.xvii.

[34]H.S.Leeson et al, 'Anopheles and Malaria in the Near East', *London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Memoir 7*, 1950, p.6. My thanks to Dr Chris Curtis and Ms Mary Gibson at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine for their help explaining malaria to me.

Western Front. In considering whether Robertson and Allenby misled Lloyd George, the difficulties outlined above must surely be considerations that need to be taken into account. While there certainly would have been advantages that would have accrued to Britain from Allenby's successes, Britain had limits to her resources and, unfortunately for her, could not do everything that she wished. Robertson pointed this out in 1927 writing that: 'No-one can dispute the great advantages that would have accrued had the Eastern strategy been possible, just as no-one will dispute that it would be very nice if we could fly. But we cannot fly'.[35]

Lloyd George's solution to the fact that Britain's war-effort was stretched in late-1917 ignored her difficult position. Robertson's lengthy memorandum of 26 December 1917 pointed out the pitfalls of a Palestine offensive, although the C.I.G.S.s estimate of the numbers of Turks that might face Allenby was exaggerated.[36] (Indeed, Lloyd George had written to Robertson on 11 December that his estimate of the Turkish opposition 'was utterly wrong'.[37]) Amery's reply to Robertson on the 30 December, made much of Robertson's inflated view of the Turks' strength.[38] Taking into account the analysis in Chapter Two, there is substance in Amery's explicit criticisms of Robertson's memorandum of the 26 December. Had Allenby attacked through Gaza, and linked this to an aggressive policy from late-1917 with a correct assessment of Turkish capabilities and intentions, Palestine might have been occupied before September 1918.

However, whether the value of this occupation would have outweighed the damage caused by the drain on resources is debatable. The occupation of the whole of Syria, which is what Lloyd George hoped for, would have involved the E.E.F. in a long-term military commitment. If Turkey had stayed in the war, Robertson's assessment of the number of troops that would have been needed to confront the Turks in northern Syria is more accurate. After the armistice in October 1918, large numbers of E.E.F. troops had to be maintained in Syria, and if the British had occupied Syria before the complete collapse of Turkey, large numbers of soldiers would have been needed for internal policing.[39]

For instance, Chauvel in September 1918 had to order off four cavalry regiments to keep order around Kuneitra on the Golan Heights due to the hostile

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[35]Robertson papers (at BL), Add.Mss.46393, Robertson to J H Spender, 12 April 1927.
[36]Robertson papers, I/16/9a, 'Future Operations in Palestine', 26 Dec.1917.
[37]Lloyd George papers, F/44/3/38. LG to Robertson, 11 Dec.1917.
[38]Lloyd George papers, F/2/1/10, 'Future Operations in Palestine: Note on Robertson's Memorandum', 30 Dec.1917.
[39]Circassians in the Trans-Jordan raids fired on the retreating EEF (WO95/4522, Anzac Div, WD, 1 Apr.1918 & WO154/167, WD, May 1918, appendix 16), and were likewise hostile in the Golan Heights area (AWM25/455 9, 'Tactical Narrative. Australian Mounted Division. Operations Resulting in the Capture of Damascus', n.d., p.2).

attitude of the local inhabitants.[40] Britain had cultivated friendly relations with the Druzes, but this should be measured against the endemic disorder for which the Ottomans had stationed large numbers of troops in the region.[41] For their punitive expedition into the Hauran region near Deraa in 1910, the Turks had deployed 21,000 soldiers, with limited success at cowing the inhabitants into submission.[42] Britain would undoubtedly have had to deploy large numbers of troops in the area simply to maintain order. The Druze uprising in the 1920s resulted in the French shelling parts of the Damascus, and the revolt took two years to subdue.[43] The peoples of the Syrian region often had little wish for central control of their affairs, and uprisings such as the Druzes' show the capacity of armed groups in the area to cause trouble.

Since the assumption was that the war would continue into 1919 — or even 1920 — any analysis of British war policy must ask whether a prolonged garrisoning of Lebanon and Syria would have been a wise use of scarce means. That the war would continue beyond 1918 was the view of the War Office who, in July 1918, insisted that any reinforcements which Allenby might receive would have to be returned for the campaign in France planned for the spring of 1919.[44] The war against Germany was to end in November 1918, but this was not the perception at the time, and that the war would probably continue beyond 1918 was a consideration in Robertson's reports.

It is not even apparent that if the E.E.F. had occupied Aleppo they would have succeeded in completely cutting-off the Turkish Sixth Army in Mesopotamia (although the incomplete Ottoman railway link to Mosul would have been severed). Smuts' report, which will be examined later in the chapter, asserted that any advance from Mesopotamia would have had its flank threatened from the north, and this was one of the reasons that Smuts opted for a Palestine offensive over one from Mesopotamia. This may be, but if so it makes Smuts' subsequent assertion that an advance to Aleppo would isolate the Turks in Mesopotamia incorrect.[45] If the Turks were able to threaten from eastern Asia Minor they were also presumably equally able to supply their Mesopotamian force from that area of eastern Anatolia evacuated by the Russian army. Thus an advance to Aleppo would not necessarily have detached the Turkish Sixth Army

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[40] *Official History*, vol.ii, p.569.

[41] For Britain's friendship with the Druze see J.Parfitt, *Among the Druzes of Lebanon & Bashan* (1917) p.5 & FO882/16, 'Druze & Recent Events' by Izzedin, 19 May 1915, p.17.

[42] C.C.R.Murphy, *Soldiers of the Prophet* (1921) pp.13, 20-21

[43] For the Druze revolt see M.Yapp, *The Near East since the First World War* (1991) pp.91-92 (also S.Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon under the French Mandate* (1958)).

[44] WO33/960, WO to Allenby, 10 July 1918, p.19.

[45] WO106/1545, G199, 'Report by General Smuts', 1 Mar.1918, pp.2-3 (copy also in CAB24/4).

in northern Mesopotamia, and Marshall would only have had four infantry divisions with which to threaten from Mesopotamia.

The role of the Arabs, which will be dealt with in the following two chapters, was to be crucial in providing an ally in the area previously occupied by the Ottomans. But it was only amongst the Hashemites that the British had a reliable ally immediately east and south of the River Jordan. Even then the Hashemites' military contribution was negligible, and Britain's attempt from the Trans-Jordan raids to spread the Arab Revolt met with little success. The reverses suffered by the E.E.F. in the spring of 1918 meant that most Arab tribes waited before joining the Arab revolt, indicating an understandable pragmatism, but also a far from clear desire to have British-sponsored rule.[46] If William Yale, America's special envoy with the E.E.F., is to be believed, many Arabs did not want Hashemite rule: 'The English know that the Syrians in general do not want their country to be under the domination of the King of the Hedjaz, and therefore realise that the ambitions of the Cherif in this direction will be opposed by the Syrians themselves'.[47] Local inhabitants in Trans-Jordan and Syria were not always well disposed to the E.E.F., and this would have been a consideration for the number of E.E.F. troops needed for pacification, precisely when the war was continuing in France.

In September 1918 at the battle of Megiddo the E.E.F. was able to deal a decisive blow to the Turks in Palestine, and install Feisal and his small army in Damascus. However, whether this was possible, or desirable, earlier in 1918 is not obvious. Lloyd George's calculations show that he did not relate the military implications of the Palestine campaign to the wider war. The upshot of Lloyd George's belief in peripheral operations was that the dispute with Robertson was moved to the Supreme War Council to force through continued action in Palestine. The forum of the Supreme War Council was used so that Robertson's opposition could be overruled, but the C.I.G.S.s conviction that he was right meant that to get his way Lloyd George had to dismiss Robertson.

During January 1918 there had been further correspondence concerning a new Palestine offensive.[48] On 2 January 1918 Robertson wrote to Allenby that the question, 'of future policy in Palestine has not yet been decided by War Cabinet, but I hope for a decision before long'.[49] This is very much a repeat of observations made in Chapter One, and indicates that while Allenby had gone out to Palestine in June 1917, by the following January what exactly constituted his

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[46]The Turkish success in maintaining their forces Amman-Maan-Medina kept most Arab tribes out of the war (see N.N.E.Bray, *Shifting Sands* (1934) pp.141-142).
[47]Yale papers, box 1: file 2, report no.2, 5 Nov.1917, p.16.
[48]WO158/611, CIGS to Allenby, 2 Jan.1918; WO33/946, Allenby to CIGS, 4 Jan.1918, p.127; WO106/729, 'Future Operations in Palestine', by CIGS, 14 Jan.1918.
[49]WO158/611 (copy also in WO33/946).

objectives was not apparent. One can say that the prevarication in 1917 was continuing into 1918, and while it was resolved with Joint Note 12, the implementation of this was made invalid by the realities of the Ludendorff offensives.

In a 14 January 1918 memorandum Robertson commented how he hoped, 'therefore that the War Cabinet will now at once give a decision as to the policy which they wish carried out, otherwise we may later on have troops and guns taking no useful part either in Egypt or in France'.[50] Robertson's view was that Allenby was the 'best judge' of what was possible against Turkey, and Allenby was cautious; the evidence earlier in this chapter indicates that a large-scale Palestine offensive could have been very risky in early-1918.[51] A conspiracy view would have us believe that Allenby, Robertson and the military were in collusion to supply misleading intelligence, but the evidence does not support such a point of view. It is conjecture to suggest that the Turks could have been pushed right out of Syria in early-1918. While the evidence from Chapter Two on Turkish weakness indicates that this was a possibility, it does not follow that the Turks would have left the war, and surrendered, if Syria had been occupied. The analysis in Chapter Two shows that Palestine up to Galilee might have been occupied if Allenby had attacked through Gaza. It does not follow that Lebanon, Trans-Jordan and Syria would have fallen to the E.E.F.

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Lloyd George's view was that the General Staff were telling him 'palpable lies'.[52] This belief seemed to be behind Lloyd George's actions in 1918. Thus he disregarded Robertson, and on 21 January 1918 the military representatives of the Supreme War Council submitted Joint Note 12, which Lloyd George was to seize on as a means to undo his C.I.G.S.[53] The representatives' conclusion was that, 'the Allies should undertake a decisive offensive against Turkey with a view to the annihilation of the Turkish Armies and the collapse of Turkish resistance'.[54]

This note was to be agreed on at the third meeting of the Supreme War Council from 30 January to 2 February, but Lloyd George's strength of feeling is shown by the fact that the War Cabinet on 28 January ordered Smuts on his

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[50]WO106/729, 'Future Operations in Palestine', 14 Jan.1918.
[51]WO106/729, CIGS (in France) to WO, 25 Jan.1918, p.2.
[52]Liddell Hart papers, II/1932 42, 'Talk with Lloyd George—Generals in WWI. LH's impressions of LG', 24 Sept.1934.
[53]Britain's representative at the SWC was Henry Wilson and he was asked to prepare Joint Note 12 on 31 December 1917 (see CAB 25/43, Hankey to Wilson).
[54]*Vide supra*, ft.1, Joint Note 12, para 19.

mission to decide whether the offensive should be in Palestine — and, if so, what reinforcements would be needed.[55] Lloyd George was obviously determined to push through an eastern strategy, and the records of the third meeting of the Supreme War Council amply show this.[56] Even Georges Clemenceau said that they should take into account Robertson's reservations, but Lloyd George was adamant, and put aside Robertson's anxiety that to attempt Joint Note 12 would be 'very dangerous'.[57] The culmination of the dispute between the Prime Minister and Robertson came in the Trianon Palace on 1 February 1918 when 'Mr Lloyd George's Resolution' that Joint Note 12 was to be the plan of campaign for 1918 'was accepted'.[58] Maurice Hankey's diary entry for 1 February recorded that Joint Note 12 was accepted, 'after a terrific struggle, as the soldiers had got at Clemenceau to oppose it', and Hankey added that Robertson entered a 'solemn protest against the Turkish campaign'.[59] Lord Hardinge's recollection at the Foreign Office was that Lloyd George did, 'all he could to humiliate him [Robertson] in the Conferences where he never consulted him and practically took no notice of him at all'.[60]

For Robertson and the General Staff the difficulty with Joint Note 12 was that part which dealt with the safety of Britain and the maintenance of the front in France (paragraphs 3-5). Both Robertson and the General Staff were explicit about the value of keeping up the pressure on the Turks and, if possible, forcing them from the war. However, from before the international conference that accepted Joint Note 12, Robertson and the military were drawing attention to the importance of the front in France, and how the Note was complacent concerning the impending German offensive.[61]. The fact that once the Ludendorff offensives were launched on 21 March 1918, most of Allenby's force had to return to France, is strong evidence of the correctness of Robertson's view.

The main problem was whether the British army in France was under strength, a disagreement that culminated with the 'Maurice letter' in May 1918.[62] There is not the space here, nor is this the place, to deal with the question of whether the B.E.F. had enough men to deal with the Germans, but in relation to the Palestine campaign, was Lloyd George's strategy militarily the most

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[55]CAB23/5/332, WC minutes, 28 Jan.1918 (extract in WO106/729).
[56]Record of the SWC meeting in CAB25/120 (also in Curzon papers, Mss Eur F112/153, IC40-41).
[57]CAB25/120, SWC, third meeting, third session, pp.9-10.
[58]*Ibid.*
[59]Hankey papers, 1/4, diary, 1-2 Feb.1918.
[60]FO800/175, Hardinge to Bertie, 6 Feb.1918.
[61]WO106/729, CIGS (in France) to WO, 25 Jan.1918, pp.1-3 & *ibid.* 'Comments by the General Staff upon Joint Note 12', 25 Jan.1918.
[62]*Ibid.*, p.2. See also Woodward, 'Did Lloyd George Starve the British Army of Men Prior to the German Offensive of 21 March 1918?', *Historical Journal*, 27, 1(1984), pp.241-252.

expedient one? To assert, as Lloyd George did, that Germany had gained many advantages from her eastern strategy is probably true. What does not follow, and ignores differences like Germany's centripetal communication network, is that 'we might have had and still might get' these advantages.[63] The disagreement with those such as Robertson and Maurice also raises the question of whether Lloyd George himself was not above a bit of 'lying' when it suited him.[64]

General Jan Smuts went out to Egypt from 12 to 22 February to organise a plan of action to implement Joint Note 12 and put into effect Lloyd George's wishes.[65] Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen wrote in his diary that it was; 'curious that we should have to rely on a Dutchman for advice which could be given by either the War Office or Allenby'.[66] That Lloyd George was using Smuts as his 'trouble-shooter' was undoubtedly because Lloyd George was tired of hearing the assessments of the military. Smuts, who had come round to Lloyd George's way of thinking about how the war would be won, and who himself was aware of Britain's post-war imperial needs, was the right choice for the Prime Minister.[67] Indeed, Amery, who after the war claimed he wrote Smuts' report, was another military novice used by Lloyd George, and Amery went to Egypt with Smuts in 1918.[68] Smuts was not only Lloyd George's representative, but the Prime Minister saw Smuts as a potential supreme commander-in-chief for the whole of the Middle East and above the control of the War Office. Henry Wilson's diary entry on this proposal for Smuts as a Middle East generalissimo was: 'Whew! Whew! Whew!'[69] Walter Kirke's comment was that Smuts' job was, 'to lend his bogus but considerable military prestige to supporting anything proposed by LG'.[70]

Leopold Amery wrote to Wavell in the 1930s that it was he who had drawn up Joint Note 12 for Wilson at the Supreme War Council.[71] That Joint Note 12 was to ignore the realities of military advice, is shown by Amery's comment to Lloyd George in January 1918 on Joint Note 12: 'he [Wilson] is

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[63]CAB25/120, LG talking at second meeting, third session of SWC, 31 Jan.1918, p.3.
[64]That Lloyd George could be mischievous see Woodward, *art.cit.*('Did LG Starve') & K.Jeffery (ed), *The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson* (1985), p.22. Also Callwell, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries* (1927) vol.ii, p.98.
[65]Full summary of trip in W.K.Hancock & J.van der Poel (eds), *Selections from the Smuts Papers* (1966) vol.iii, 'General Smuts's Mission to Egypt', pp.612-624 (from Smuts papers (Pretoria, South Africa) vol.20, no.49).
[66]Meinertzhagen diaries, vol.20, 13 Feb.1918.
[67]See Woodward, 'The Imperial Strategist: Jan Christiaan Smuts and British Military Policy 1917-18', *Military History Journal*, December 1981, p.141.
[68]Allenby papers, 6/IX-X/4, Amery to Wavell, 16 Nov.1936 (copy also in Allenby hanging file at St. Antony's College).
[69]Wilson papers, diaries, reel 8, 16 Jan.1918.
[70]Kirke papers, vol.vii, p.6.
[71]Allenby papers, 6/IX-X/5, Amery to Wavell, 27 Mar.1939, p 10.

pushing along at top speed, and the result ought to be a document on which you can then act without hesitation and in the face of any obstruction'.[72]

Lloyd George's attachment to action in Palestine was also influenced by a certain sentimentality. Curzon, after the war, wrote to Balfour how Lloyd George, 'clings to Palestine for its sentimental and traditional value, and talks about Jerusalem with almost the same enthusiasm as about his native hills'.[73] John Darwin makes a similar point suggesting that Lloyd George had a 'curiously irrational' dislike of Turkey, which stood in contrast to his pragmatic attitude to Germany, and which was to lead the Prime Minister into the Chanak Crisis in 1922.[74] These personal feelings may well have helped reinforce Lloyd George's desire to occupy Palestine. Lloyd George's antipathy to the Turks was not unique, and probably had its origins in Gladstonian anger at atrocities against Christians in Bulgaria and Armenia.

General Smuts submitted his report on how best to implement the ideas embodied in Joint Note 12 on 1 March 1918.[75] In three weeks' time the first German offensive was going to break against the British Third and Fifth Armies, so what Smuts had to say was to become irrelevant. Smuts did not say whether he was aware of the impending German offensive, and the rather doctrinaire conclusions in his report meant that Allenby regarded him as a representative that he had to tolerate but would ignore if at all possible.

General Smuts' first decision was that the impending offensive against the Ottoman empire should come in Palestine, and not Mesopotamia, and for this Mesopotamia should send two divisions — besides the 7th Meerut — and some extra artillery, while France would provide an Indian cavalry division.[76] Leaving aside the strain on shipping, Smuts' proposals would have resulted in the E.E.F. being augmented to ten infantry divisions, four mounted divisions, a cavalry brigade, along with a strengthened artillery pool.

Once the gravity of the German offensives in France was realised, the E.E.F. had to supply France with infantry units to an extent that the E.E.F. was left with only one trained 'all-white' infantry division (the 54th) with twelve British battalions, as opposed to nine Indian and three British battalions. This is a point worth emphasising in any analysis of war strategy. Allenby had to absorb some 216 partially trained Indian infantry companies, as well as thirteen Indian cavalry squadrons so as to bring his force back up to strength following the

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[72]Lloyd George papers, F/2/1/13, Amery to LG, 18 Jan 1918

[73]Balfour papers, Add.Mss 49734, Curzon to Balfour, 20 Aug 1919.

[74]Darwin, Britain, *Egypt and the Middle East: Imperial Policy in the aftermath of war 1918-22* (1981) p.14.

[75]CAB24/4/G199, 'Report by General Smuts on his Mission to Egypt', 1 Mar 1918 (also in WO106/1545).

[76]*Ibid.*, pp.2-3.

removal of British battalions to France. Allenby wrote to Wilson that 'the new arrivals are short of training', and added that some Pathans had deserted to the Turks.[77] The Ottoman Sultan was the spiritual leader for Sunni Muslims, and as 29 per cent. of Allenby's newly arrived infantry were Muslims, this made Allenby's re-organisation particularly problematic. In July 1918 Allenby cabled the War Office about his concern over unrest within his Indian drafts, and of the worrying presence of seditious documents written in 'Indian vernacular'.[78] If Allenby had attacked in the spring of 1918 he would have had to do so with the 54th Division: the only infantry division left to him intact.

To plan the sort of movements that Smuts did in his March report was a quite pointless exercise. In W.K. Hancock's biography of Smuts he asserts that Allenby's final defeat of the Turks owed much to Smuts' March plan, and that Allenby's plan only differed from Smuts' in two respects.[79] Not only are the two differences alluded to quite major ones, but to say that the plan of the battle of Megiddo was based on Smuts' military acumen is simply wrong. Not only did circumstance negate what Smuts had to say, but Allenby seems to have taken little notice of Smuts' recommendations anyway. All in all Smuts' visit thus seems like a wasted effort.

The only part of Smuts' plan that Allenby did follow was the attempt to isolate the Turkish Hedjaz force by advancing to Amman to cut off the Pilgrims' railroad. This single-track narrow-gauge railway ran down to the Hedjaz by way of Maan, and supplied the two Turkish divisions permanently stationed south of Amman on the line and in Medina.[80] Allenby had, however, been planning to assault Amman from December 1917, and said so in his telegram of the 14 December 1917, and in February 1918 Jericho was taken as a base to organise the attack over the Jordan.[81] In the end the Turks' tactical skill, coupled with bad weather and poor planning by the E.E.F., defeated the E.E.F. in the Trans-Jordan raids. The removal of troops to France from March 1918 to reinforce the B.E.F. made any subsequent significant attack impossible. So Allenby had to wait until the autumn when the war was decided not in the Middle East but on the Western Front.

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[77]Wilson papers, HHW2/33A/4, Allenby to Wilson, 5 June 1918. (For Pathan discontent see also L/MIL/17/5/3919-3920.)

[78]Milner papers, III/B/140, GHQ Egypt to War Office, 1 July 1918 (29% figure here also).

[79]W K.Hancock, *Smuts: The Sanguine Years 1870-1919* (1962) vol i, p.472.

[80]P.Graves (ed), *Memoirs of King Abdullah of Transjordan* (1950) pp.165-166 (also chart of Turkish order of battle in WO95/4510) There was the 58th Division in Medina, and detachments at Maan and Tebuk which seem to have been designated the 62nd Division (see Murphy, *Soldiers of the Prophet*, pp.186, 187, 194).

[81]CAB24/37/GT3112, appendix II, Allenby to CIGS, 14 Dec.1917. For Jericho's capture see *Official History*, vol.ii, ch xiv.

Jeremy Wilson's biography of T.E. Lawrence also gives the impression that Smuts arrived and everything changed. Lawrence returned to G.H.Q. in February 1918 to discover, 'that Allenby had been instructed to resume the offensive as soon as possible. Although Jericho had only just been taken, plans were already in train for an advance to Beirut, Damascus and beyond'.[82] While Allenby was 'instructed' by Smuts, whether he was going to take notice of this order is not altogether evident as Smuts was seen as an interloper by the military experts. Yigal Sheffy makes the same assumption arguing that in, 'the wake of this decision [acceptance of Joint Note 12], Allenby began to plan his next phase'. Allenby had been planning 'his next phase' from December 1917, and for Sheffy to go on and assert that Allenby hoped to threaten 'Damascus through the Tripoli-Homs gap', is to ascribe a rather absurd idea of Smuts' to Allenby, who could see the difficulties of Smuts' proposal to advance to northern Lebanon.[83]

General Allenby had a plan of action based on a gradual advance to northern Palestine, and this plan was to rely on pushing forward his railway with his army. The Trans-Jordan raids would, if successful, serve the dual-role of securing Allenby's eastern flank, and by combining with Hashemite forces the E.E.F. could help keep Britain's ally in the field. The political importance of Feisal's force was a factor, as a Foreign Office report in December 1918 shows: 'the permanent political advantages of the Arab movement for British policy outweigh its comparative military ineffectiveness'.[84]

General Smuts' plan was for an advance to Haifa, to be followed by a push by one column up the coast to Tyre and Beirut. This column would then turn Damascus by advancing inland, although this might not happen until they had reached the Tripoli-Homs gap in northern Lebanon. The other smaller column was to advance on Deraa 'repairing the Turkish railway' as it went, and then advance on Damascus up the railroad from the south.[85] This plan of Smuts' bears little or no resemblance to what happened at the battle of Megiddo. It would seem that Smuts' visit did force Allenby to do something, so he pushed through the Trans-Jordan raids, when left to his own inclinations he might not have pursued these as aggressively as he did. Chetwode, writing to Wavell after the war, wrote disparagingly of Smuts' visit:-

> With regard to the Smuts/Amery interview. Were you there? If so do you remember the frightful nonsense they talked in the garden of our headquarters in Jerusalem. They suggested that we should cross the

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[82]Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia: The Authorised Biography* (1990) p 484.
[83]Sheffy, 'Institutionalised Deception and Perception Reinforcement: Allenby's Campaign in Palestine, 1917-8', in Handel, *Intelligence and Military Operations* (1990) pp.198-9.
[84]FO371/4352, PC130, 'Memo on French and Arab claims in the ME', 19 Dec.1918.
[85]CAB24/4/G199, 'Report by General Smuts on Mission to Egypt', 1 Mar.1918, pp.4-5.

> Jordan and use the Hedjaz railway to, what they called 'turn the Damascus position', quite forgetting that we had no rolling stock on it nor were the Turks likely to leave any.[86]

Chetwode concluded how he could, 'hardly describe Allenby's attitude to Smuts, at any rate at Jerusalem, as "cordial". He was bored to death with his being there.'[87] Jonathan Newell's conclusion that Allenby, 'listened' to Smuts' ideas and 'was not entirely unsympathetic to them' is not substantiated by the evidence that Allenby had been formulating his plans from December 1917, and that Smuts' plan in his March report bore little relation to Allenby's subsequent campaign.[88]

In the papers of Henry Gullett, Australia's official historian, Chauvel makes interesting suggestions on why Allenby pushed through the Trans-Jordan raids. Chauvel's comments on chapters of the *Australian Official History* lend weight to the idea Allenby was essentially following his own plan in attacking across the River Jordan, and that this attack would support the E.E.F.s main drive up the Palestine coast. Having said this, Chauvel does not seem altogether clear exactly why Allenby pushed through the Trans-Jordan raids. His remark that possibly Allenby 'was committed to Feisal' indicates a combination of military and political factors which made the raids seem attractive to Allenby.[89] Allenby seems to have had a genuine worry about what would become an extended eastern flank, and saw in attacking across the Jordan a means of diverting Turkish attention away from the main coastal attack, of linking up with the Arabs, and doing something to meet the wishes of Smuts. If Smuts saw the E.E.F. attacking across the Jordan, which he thought a good preliminary operation, this would probably keep the politicians like Lloyd George from interfering excessively in military plans.

Lt.-Gen. Chauvel's notes indicate that Allenby wanted to secure the town of Es Salt, 'until Feisal was in a position to take it over'.[90] As will be shown in Chapter Four, the Arabs were unable to take and maintain control in the Trans-Jordan area, and the Turks skilfully deployed their forces to make the E.E.F. withdraw. The Trans-Jordan raids were, in many respects, a mistake. However, notwithstanding the pressure from Smuts, they were essentially Allenby's mistake, and part of Allenby's strategy for a gradual advance to the line Haifa-Nazareth. Allenby seemed to be trying to do his best to please everyone: Smuts

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[86]Allenby papers, 6/IX-X/18, Chetwode to Wavell, 28 Mar.1939.
[87]*Ibid.*
[88]Newell, 'Learning the Hard Way: Allenby in Egypt and Palestine 1917-19', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, September 1991, p.375.
[89]Gullett papers, AWM40/97, notes by Chauvel on chs.xxxv & xxxvi of *Australian Official History*.
[90]Gullett papers, AWM40/97, notes by Chauvel on ch.xxxv.

and Lloyd George, while Robertson and the General Staff were warning him of the difficulties to come in France. Allenby was in an unenviable position.

After the war Chauvel noted how he was 'convinced that' Allenby 'had already made up his mind to make his next big advance from the Western Flank, when he ordered the Es Salt operation and that his main object in this raid...was the concentration of the Turkish mind on his Eastern Flank'.[91] The casual planning of the Trans-Jordan raids confirms that Allenby expected the Turkish front across the Jordan to disintegrate. It would then be easy to extend the Arab Revolt and cut off the Turkish troops in the Hedjaz, and these actions would have helped the main British advance on the Palestine coast. Chauvel's comment that Allenby, 'always appeared to have a hankering after this flank' across the Jordan seems accurate.[92] Richard Aldington is correct to assert that Allenby was, 'determined not to attempt the forward move...until the Hejaz railway forces were dealt with'.[93] For Allenby the non-military benefits to be had from promoting Hashemite rule in Trans-Jordan and Syria were secondary to his task as a commander. Allenby seems to have viewed the Arabs primarily in terms of their help to his campaign, and for Allenby their political purpose was an additional consideration which had to be taken into account. While Feisal's Arab force was small, it is worth emphasising that, 'no commander can afford to turn down offers of assistance in war which may immobilise or destroy even one enemy soldier'.[94] William Bartholomew, Allenby's Brigadier General-General Staff at Megiddo, wrote after the war how, 'Allenby was wise as a strategist to employ anyone who could by ever so much or so little assist his plans'.[95] These comments give some indication of Allenby's attitude toward the Arab armies across the River Jordan.

As it was, the Trans-Jordan raids did not succeed, and before Allenby could turn to his main advance on the Palestine coast, 'the German offensive in France altered the whole situation in Palestine...Allenby lost the pick of his troops and had to set about reorganisation and training' his partially-trained Indian troops sent as replacements.[96] Chauvel claimed in an appreciation following Allenby's death that his C.-in-C. said about the Trans-Jordan raids:-

> 'Failure be damned. It has been a great success!' My face showed astonishment...A few days afterwards he told me that his main objective in the two Trans-Jordan raids had been to convince the Turkish High

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[91] *Ibid*, notes by Chauvel on ch.xxxvi.
[92] *Ibid.*
[93] Aldington, *Lawrence of Arabia* (1955) p.215.
[94] R.Wingate, *Wingate of the Sudan* (1955) p.194 (Wingate was discussing Allenby's use of the Arabs for his campaign).
[95] Allenby papers, 7/4/5, Bartholomew to Andrew, 25 Jan.1955.
[96] Bartholomew papers, 1/7, 'General War Situation Jan.1918', p.18.

Command that his next attack would be from that flank, whereas he intended to attack on the Mediterranean coast.[97]

Presumably Allenby was trying to gain some benefit from what was a marked failure. The Turks after the Trans-Jordan raids were worried by the possibilities of a further advance from the Jordan valley, and on 14 July 1918 attacked the E.E.F. at Musallabeh in an attempt to retake Jericho. But the worry for the Turks of further attacks from the Jordan valley was an unintended benefit for the E.E.F. from the Trans-Jordan raids.[98] (As in France during the 1918 offensives when the Germans stopped to loot British supply dumps, the Germans who formed the spearhead of the 14 July attack did likewise, the result being most of them got very drunk on captured spirits and had to be helped off to captivity.[99]) In the Trans-Jordan raids Allenby and the E.E.F. underestimated the Turks, were unfortunate with the weather, and launched their attack just when the E.E.F. was to be used as a reserve pool for France. The Arabs played a part in the conception of the raids, in that Feisal could take over the administration of the Trans-Jordan, but the E.E.F. had an accurate estimate of the limited military value of the Arabs.

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The conclusion is that there was a failure in tactics by the E.E.F. in the Trans-Jordan raids, and also a confusion in British war strategy as decided in London, and that this state of affairs was both unfortunate and probably avoidable. Allenby was complacent in assuming the Turkish Fourth Army, based at Es Salt, could be defeated. However, the basic fault, and the focus of the analysis of this chapter, lay in the command structure above Allenby, and which was outside his control. While Allenby led himself into the Trans-Jordan raids, this mistake was a smaller part of a greater misdirection of strategy formulated in London.

The despatch of Smuts put pressure on Allenby, but beyond occupying Palestine, which both agreed on, it seems unlikely that Allenby would have followed Smuts' report of 1 March. The evidence is that Allenby had his own plan of attack, and before it could be developed the Ludendorff offensives concentrated attention on France. The argument that Lloyd George was the victim of military duplicity seems overstated. Walter Kirke's remarks from

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[97]Allenby papers, 6/IX-X/16, 'Lord Allenby—An Appreciation', 1 June 1936.

[98]For Jericho being the objective see Bean papers, AWM38/3DRL/ 7953/32, encl. by Chauvel in Bean to Edmonds 15 Nov.1929 & *Australian Official History*, p.672. German troops in the 14 July attack were angry at being let-down by the Turkish troops, and von Sanders wrote: 'Nothing proved better the deterioration of the efficiency of Turkish troops than these events of July 14th' (*Five Years in Turkey* (1927) p.253).

[99]R.M.P.Preston, *The Desert Mounted Corps* (1921) pp.184-185.

Chapter One, to which can be added similar remarks by Amery on Guy Dawnay's role in 'damning Palestine', show the British General Staff attempting to push their own priorities, while Lloyd George was trying to impose his own ideas on how best to win the war.[100] To see the advice of those like Robertson as being deceitful is surely wrong, and the evidence on what would have happened if the E.E.F. had pushed forward supports Robertson. Furthermore, opponents of Robertson were forced into the position of branding Robertson a liar simply because the assessments he produced did not accord with what Lloyd George wanted.

General Allenby was in an awkward position with his political and military superiors which cannot have helped him in his task. This situation got worse after the war as Allenby, instead of being caught in between Robertson and Lloyd George, found himself trapped between the French and the British governments as they negotiated who was going to administer Syria. To say that Allenby was cautious in late-1917 and early-1918 does not convey fully the difficulties which he faced. Terms such as 'cautious' and 'methodical' acquire unnecessarily pejorative overtones. In Palestine Allenby was having to build on the failures of Murray, and do so within the dispute between Robertson and Lloyd George. The estimates that Allenby gave for his requirements in Palestine should be viewed within the context of a new commander getting to grips with his new force. Military operations take time to plan and to organise logistically. If Allenby had rushed into an attack in early-1918, and it had failed due to hasty staff work, politicians such as Lloyd George would have rightly been critical of the generals for not doing their job properly. Allenby's ability to follow his own course of action also shows the necessity of not overly emphasising the plans of Lloyd George. Lloyd George's strategy has been shown to have had serious flaws, but Allenby was still able to contribute sensible military advice which helped temper Lloyd George's rather extravagant plans, the more so as he was not in Robertson's position of being close to the Prime Minister on a day-by-day basis. The geographic distance of Allenby from London certainly did help him resist carrying through orders that he thought inappropriate.

At the third battle of Gaza the plan adopted does not appear to have been the best one, and in the planning and execution of the Trans-Jordan raids the E.E.F. made mistakes. However, looking at the Palestine campaign as part of Britain's war strategy, Allenby's normally careful approach, which Robertson eagerly seized on, was correct. Desirable as Turkey's defeat would have been, it is not an accurate appraisal that Turkey stayed in the war until October 1918 because Allenby lacked the necessary drive. To assert this is to ignore factors

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[100]Lloyd George papers, F/2/1/14, Amery to LG, 27 Jan.1918. Although Amery added that Allenby did not seem to be part of the scheme to throw 'cold water on Palestine'.

such as the Ludendorff offensives and the importance of the Western Front, and the reality that an advance to Aleppo could well have caused more difficulties for the E.E.F. than for the Turks.

It remains to look at the Trans-Jordan raids which have been mentioned in this chapter, but not in any detail, and put forward evidence to support the assertion that the raids were a defeat, especially as the raids are portrayed positively in existing histories of the campaign. Also, that the raids were part of a long-term imperial strategy to use the Hashemites for British gain is something that can now be analysed. The Arab Bureau in Cairo helped maintain the Arab Revolt, and at the Trans-Jordan raids they sought to establish Britain's ally, Feisal, in Amman. In the end this aim was achieved by the E.E.F. on 1 October 1918, and that it was not realised earlier was, in this author's opinion, because the situation in Palestine did not lend itself to a crushing defeat of the Turks until the autumn of 1918.

Lloyd George claimed in his *War Memoirs* that Allenby's, 'caution was not due to any fear of being beaten by this miserable remnant of a defeated army, but rather to his dread of the consequences of brushing aside the restraining hand from Whitehall'.[101] This chapter has shown that the situation was more complicated than this in terms of what the E.E.F. was capable. Lloyd George continued by saying that the consequences of Allenby's inaction in early-1918 was that it, 'enabled the Turks to hold out almost to the end, and to hold up hundreds of thousands of British troops'.[102] What can be added is that if the Prime Minister's strategy had been followed through by a vigorous and reinforced E.E.F. earlier in the year, the outcome would probably have been precisely the same: Turkey still in the war, and Britain still with a substantial troop commitment in an area distant from the main fighting in France where the First World War was won.

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[101] Lloyd George, *War Memoirs* (1938) vol ii, p.1092.
[102] *Ibid.*, p.1093.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE TRANS-JORDAN RAIDS; COMBINING WITH THE ARABS, MARCH-MAY 1918.

> Allenby came to Chauvel's H.Q. and after talking to him took me aside and discussed a plan for withdrawal. He was curiously quiet at the end I said 'I will go on attacking until the mounted brigades get out. I think they can get...down by the Umm Es Shert. Anyway we'll get them out for you'. He did not say anything for a bit and then turned to me and said 'Well you'd better go off now and get on with what you're going to do'. He went and spoke to Chauvel again and then went straight back...I never saw him like that before or since. (Allenby papers, 6/IX-X/40-41, Gen. Sir John Shea to Archibald Wavell, 10 May [1939?].)

This chapter introduces the Arab Revolt and examines Arab operations in relation to the two Trans-Jordan raids from March to May 1918. This analysis is continued in Chapter Five with detailed examination of the orders following the battle of Megiddo in September 1918. These orders directed the cavalry advancing on Damascus to avoid the city so as to permit an Arab administration to establish itself in Damascus. From Chapter Five the focus of this thesis is on the political usefulness of the operations in Palestine at the post-war peace talks, and on the part that Feisal's administration in Damascus would play in these talks. While the first four chapters are concerned primarily with war policy, the battle of Megiddo is best understood as part of the preliminaries to the Paris Peace Conference. The Central powers lost the war on the Western Front, and the battle of Megiddo was unimportant for the Entente's eventual victory over Germany in the autumn of 1918. For this reason the tactics of the battle of Megiddo will be ignored. This can be contrasted with the third battle of Gaza and the Trans-Jordan raids, whose significance was for Britain's prosecution of the war. Chapter Five will conclude the Palestine campaign and will introduce the peace negotiations, 1918-19. The Paris Peace Conference of 1919 ended in the E.E.F.s withdrawal from Syria in November 1919.

In the main, this chapter analyses the Trans-Jordan raids for their military and political significance to the campaign of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. This is done under three separate headings toward the end of the chapter. It is necessary, before doing this, to: firstly, establish Allenby's role in the politics of the campaign; secondly, make some brief comment on T.E. Lawrence; thirdly, explain the relationship of the Arabs to the formulation of E.E.F. operational planning, and say something further on why the raids were launched and why they failed. The three headed sections continue some of these themes, but while the first half of this chapter concentrates on strategy, the headed sections concentrate more on tactics and how the Trans-Jordan raids related to strategy. It is noteworthy that while the grand strategy of the Palestine campaign has the

most significance for the historian, it was success or failure at the tactical level which was the determining factor: without battlefield victory little would happen.

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In appendix three of this thesis the author introduces affirmation of the explicit British aim to install Feisal in Damascus. This letter from Guy Dawnay's brother, Lt.-Col. Alan Dawnay, who was attached to the Northern Arab Army, to Major Pierce Joyce, one of the British officers with Feisal, implicates Allenby in the plan to manipulate Feisal.[1] Writing before the fall of Damascus, Dawnay told Joyce that Allenby:-

> does NOT wish Feisal to dash off, on his own, to Damascus or elsewhere — we shall soon be able to put him there as part of our operations & if he darts off prematurely without Gen. A's knowledge and consent, to guarantee his action, there will be the very devil to pay later on, it might upset the whole apple cart...The situation is completely in our hands to mould now, F. need have no fear of being carted.[2]

Alan Dawnay's letter builds on Elie Kedourie's and Elizabeth Monroe's existing evidence that Britain allowed Feisal into Damascus: 'Our permitting the occupation of Damascus by the Sharifians has allayed some of the suspicion of French [sic] intentions'.[3] Beckles Willson, in his *National Review* article, points to Allenby's role in carrying out orders which had political provenance, and which aimed to assist Feisal.[4] The analysis in this chapter, and more especially Chapter Five, shows that the E.E.F. tailored their operations to help promote Feisal and the Hashemites.

General Allenby certainly would have known of these political plans. The important questions, however, are how and why Britain was using the Hashemites. This is not to say that Allenby was merely a cipher for instructions from London, but that Allenby's focus was on command of his army. Brian Gardner, in his biography of Allenby, writes on the battle of Megiddo that, 'Allenby's part was twofold; the urging on of his forces in pursuit, and making the

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[1]It is not readily apparent whether Joyce was a Major or a Lt Col.

[2]See appendix 3.

[3]The quote is Clayton (Allenby's CPO) to FO, 8 Oct.1918 and is in Wingate papers, 150/2/8-9 and Milner papers, III/B/140, p.94. Monroe first quoted it in *Britain's Moment in the Middle East* (1963) p.62 but did not source it. Kedourie then referenced it in the 'Capture of Damascus' chapter in *The Chatham House Version* (p.36) and while saying that it was in the Milner and Wingate papers did not say where. Kedourie and Monroe have the quote as above but end it (*incorrectly*) with 'British intentions'.

[4]B.Willson, 'Our Amazing Syrian Adventure', *National Review*, September 1920, pp.46-47. Willson misdates the Hotel Victoria meeting to 5 October.

difficult political decisions regarding the occupation of Damascus'.[5] Kedourie, reviewing Gardner's book, remarked on this, saying that the politics of the campaign were crucial, and that Gardner did not amplify this 'pregnant opening'.[6] While Kedourie is right to stress the political element to the Palestine campaign, Allenby's part in this was implementation and not instigation.

As High Commissioner for Egypt, 1919-25, Allenby was able to withstand pressure from London where ongoing discussions to settle a form of Egyptian self-government were taking place. Allenby was intelligent and strong-willed, both as a general and high commissioner, but he was still having to carry out policy as decided in London. The chain of command was such that as an officer Allenby would carry out the orders issued to him. Allenby certainly stamped his strong personality on events, but it is not in Allenby as an individual that one finds the answers to explain British policy toward the Middle East.[7]

The evidence discussed in Chapter Two showed Allenby's involvement in using the O.E.T.A. system to exclude the French from Palestine in late-1917. However, while Allenby used military exigencies for political ends, his own worries, leaving aside the strategies expounded by those such as Leopold Amery, would not have led him to encourage a French administration anywhere in his military zone. Kedourie is right to concentrate on why Britain allowed Feisal into Damascus, but the idea of using the Arab Revolt and the Hashemites for British ends was not Allenby's.

An incident which well illustrates Allenby's function in the politics of the E.E.F.s campaign came following the battle of Megiddo when Allenby went to Damascus to meet Feisal so as to stabilise matters for the War Cabinet in London. At a meeting at the Hotel Victoria on 3 October 1918 Allenby told Feisal that he would be allowed to rule only the Syrian hinterland, and would have to accept a French liaison officer (although with limited powers). Feisal naturally 'objected very strongly', which confronted Allenby with a dilemma. His response was typical, and gives a good indication of Allenby's attitude toward non-military matters: 'the Chief told Feisal that he, Sir Edmund Allenby, was Commander in Chief and that he, Feisal, was at the moment a Lieut-General under his Command and that he would have to obey orders. That he must accept the situation as it was and that the whole matter would be settled at the conclusion of the War.'[8] In fact, it was to be almost two years before Feisal's

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[5]Gardner, *Allenby* (1965) p.182.

[6]Review of Gardner's *Allenby* by Kedourie, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.1, No.4, July 1965, p.410.

[7]Allenby says little in his papers on his feelings on these wider considerations, although his diaries were lost after his death in 1936 (see James, *Imperial Warrior* (1993) p.xii).

[8]See appendix 4.

'situation' was settled, and then by a French expeditionary force which forcibly removed him from Syria.

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This thesis critically examines the military value of the Arabs to the E.E.F.s campaign. To reassess the Arabs in terms of their military contribution to the Palestine campaign is not new, and has often been bound up in one way or another in post-war accounts on T.E. Lawrence ('of Arabia'). From the late-1920s a number of the thirty or so biographies on Lawrence have used the Arab campaign to try and prove whether Lawrence exaggerated the Arabs' part in the Palestine campaign.[9] The most striking example of criticism of Lawrence was Richard Aldington's *Lawrence of Arabia: A Biographical Enquiry* (1955). While Kedourie sees in Aldington's biography 'a cold and critical glance over the public events in which Lawrence was involved', Kedourie also mentions how many were upset by Aldington's biography.[10]

During the First World War Lawrence's character was not an issue in the way it was to become after the war. Within the staff of the E.E.F. there was a realistic attitude toward the Arabs' military capabilities, and while British staff officers were quite capable of misreading the Arabs, they did not do so because of the historiography on Lawrence. Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, an E.E.F. staff officer, recorded in his diary for 10 December 1917 how he told Lawrence that the Arabs, 'were just looters and murderers, they would not stand casualties and were well understood by the Turks who refused to enlist them in combatant units', adding that it was, 'safe to say that Lawrence's Desert Campaigns had not the slightest effect on the main theatre west of the Jordan'.[11] While Meinertzhagen was echoing the feelings of many British regular officers with the E.E.F., he was ignoring the political role of the Arabs, and that their military task was to harry and distract the Turks and not to fight pitched battles. The military status of the Arabs was highlighted during the Trans-Jordan raids when the British assigned the Arab units a minor supporting role, realising the difficulty that the Arabs would have fighting regular Turkish units.

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[9]For the historiography of the numerous biographies of Lawrence see B.Holden Reid, 'T.E. Lawrence and his Biographers' in Bond (ed), *The First World War and British Military History* (1991) & Kedourie, 'Colonel Lawrence and his Biographers' in Kedourie (ed), *Islam and the Modern World and Other Studies* (1980).

[10]Kedourie, 'Colonel Lawrence' chapter in *Islam & Modern World*, p 263.

[11]Second quote from Meinertzhagen, *Middle East Diary* (1959) p.28.

If such a thing as a 'Lawrence legend' exists this thesis is not the place to discuss it.[12] The emphasis here is on Allenby's campaign, and British strategy towards the Middle East. The Arabs had a part to play in both of the afore-mentioned, and Lawrence was a liaison officer in the desert with the Arabs. In evaluating the position of the Arabs relative to the Palestine campaign the difficulty is that historical evidence is contained within private papers of people with distinct views on Lawrence. In this thesis the focus of analysis is on the Palestine campaign, and British policy regarding the campaign. Lawrence was an influential liaison officer attached to Feisal, but it is necessary to detach the objective from the subjective when assessing Lawrence's part in the Palestine campaign. Jonathan Nicholls' recent book on the battle of Arras relates how following Allenby's removal to Palestine he, 'did brilliantly in Palestine, working closely with T.E. Lawrence (of Arabia), a junior officer whom Allenby shrewdly used to win over the support of the Arabs'.[13] Lawrence only became a full colonel at the war's end; Allenby as a full general in charge of an expeditionary force would not have sat round a table organising strategy with a junior officer. Nicholls' comment is evidence of a wide-spread view which imparts to Lawrence and the Arab operations a military importance that they did not have at the time.

Current interest in the Arab campaign has rather obscured what Allenby's real preoccupations were from 1917-18. Planning of E.E.F. operations took into account many considerations, one relatively minor one being the Arabs. Brian Holden Reid makes this point in his essay on Lawrence when discussing Aldington's biography:-

> The only aspect of his [Aldington] account which the modern historian finds interesting is his impatience with the disproportionate attention devoted to the Arab Revolt at the expense of Allenby's campaign. This 'begs the question as to who really defeated the Turks in 1918?' To which one may retort that Aldington's highly personalised approach did nothing to redress the balance. On the contrary, it continued to focus attention on Lawrence at the expense of Allenby.[14]

The post-war, indeed really post-1930, interest in Lawrence's political, military and personal part in the war has served to distort popular and academic perceptions of what Allenby's priorities were during the First World War.[15] This

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[12]Lawrence's 1911 diary of his travels in Arabia is reviewed in *The Middle East* journal (July/August 1995) with the comment that the diary 'gives a revealing perspective on Lawrence before his life was transformed into myth' (p.33).

[13]Nicholls, *Cheerful Sacrifice: The Battle of Arras 1917* (1993) p.217.

[14]'Holden Reid, 'TE Lawrence' in Bond (ed), *First World War* (1991) p.246.

[15]For interest in TEs political role see correspondence in Lawrence hanging file (from *The Times* 29 July 1969 'Were the Arabs double-crossed by Lawrence' & letters, 31 July & 2, 4, 6, August

is understandable inasmuch as Lawrence was a symbol for the political repercussions for the modern Middle East of the Palestine campaign, also that Lawrence's military exploits looked so different to the attritional warfare in France. The result, however, is that the extensive post-war accounts on Lawrence have left the oddity that most lay-people know of Lawrence but not Allenby.[16]

Biographies of Lawrence have gone through phases, and have been critical of their subject, but all these biographical differences can divert attention away from the central role of the E.E.F. as the driving force of the Palestine campaign. Until September 1918 the Arab front was a secondary and relatively quiet battle zone, and in the autumn of 1918 at the battle of Megiddo it was not the Arabs who defeated the Turkish armies but Allenby's regular army. Militarily, the Arabs were to harass and distract Ottoman forces. The E.E.F.s General Staff had more pressing concerns in 1918 than the Arab campaign, such as absorbing untrained Indian troops, and the Arab operations subsequently assumed an allure they did not have at the time. Allenby saw in the Arabs a useful adjunct to the E.E.F., but this was about all, and with Allenby's military focus this was proper. This is not to diminish the effort and bravery surrounding the Arab Revolt, just to place it in its proper historical context.

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Had the Trans-Jordan raids succeeded in establishing the E.E.F. in Es Salt and Amman, the Turkish supply line via their railway to the Hedjaz would have been broken.[17] The Turks' Medina garrison received some supplies from desert caravans and this, along with careful rationing, allowed them to hold out even after the Hejaz railway was permanently interrupted south of Maan in April 1918. But with the strength of the E.E.F. in Amman, the Turkish garrisons from Amman to Medina would have been rendered harmless, and probably would have surrendered, something they did not do when facing the Arabs.[18] Once established in Trans-Jordan the British would be in direct contact with the N.A.A., and the Arabs could easily be supplied and supported. Allenby's right

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1969). See also review of *Secret Lives* by Kedourie, *Sunday Times*, 28 Sept.1969 & 'Lawrence's secret Arabian "slush fund"', P.Henessy, *The Times* 11 Feb.1980.

[16]It was after the war, in 1919, that Lowell Thomas in his picture show (and then book in 1924: *With Lawrence in Arabia*) began the popularising of TEs military episodes. Thomas's picture show at first was about Allenby.

[17]See CAB/23/5/256(4), 28 Feb.1918.

[18]Medina did not fall until January 1919 when Fahreddin Pasha (the garrison's GOC) was ordered to surrender by the Turkish high command in Istanbul. See S.Tanvir Wasti, 'The Defence of Medina 1916-19', *Middle Eastern Studies*, October 1991, pp.642-653. The usual estimate of 20,000 Turks south of Amman (see for instance Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse* (1978) p.142) is far too high.

flank would then be secured for his main advance up the Palestine coast, which was to follow on from the Trans-Jordan raids. The importance of establishing a workable supply route to the N.A.A. led the British to develop a little 'fleet' on the Dead Sea, and British officers made reconnaissances into the inhospitable land just east of the Dead Sea to examine possible routes to the Arabs so as to make a seamless join between the E.E.F. and the Arabs.[19] The rather mundane business of supply routes and securing flanks gives some indication of the motivation behind the Trans-Jordan raids.

The plan to attack across the River Jordan seemed a good use of the E.E.F.s power. The Australian historian with the E.E.F., Henry Gullett, in his papers, noted: 'Now towards end of April G.H.Q. would probably give great deal to have Es Salt. Without it and the hill area across Jordan we are condemned to spend summer in the valley and this will mean heavy wastage and extreme discomfort.'[20] The difficulty in the Jordan Valley was the particularly harsh summer climate which made the higher Es Salt-Amman area appear more salubrious for billeting the men of the E.E.F. It will be remembered that securing decent billets in Gaza town was one of the reasons put forward for launching the spring 1917 Gaza battles.

Militarily, the presence of the Turkish Fourth Army in the Trans-Jordan area was a real concern, especially if the envisaged coastal advance were successful. Without the Hedjaz railway this threat would not have been so apparent, but the line to Medina allowed the Turks great flexibility in defensive and offensive operations. This was commented on by a War Office report in 1906: 'Whichever line of invasion the Turks adopt, it is obvious that the railway from Aleppo to Maan is a military asset of the greatest value'.[21] The Hedjaz railway, ostensibly built to ferry pilgrims to the Muslim holy sites, was very much part of the Ottoman strategy to keep control in western Arabia.[22] The Ottoman forces on the Hedjaz railway worried Allenby.

The aforementioned factors made occupation of the Amman area an attractive military proposition.[23] The difficulty with the planned occupation of the Trans-Jordan region was twofold: firstly, the E.E.F. because of the Ludend-

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[19]For importance of Dead Sea to British strategy see Wilson papers, HHHW2/33A/7, Allenby to Wilson 15 June 1918. Boats were moved from Jaffa to the Dead Sea (WO158/621, minutes of C-in-C conference, GHQ, 26 Feb.1918) and for reconnaissances east of the Dead Sea see 'Dead Sea Boats' folder in WO95/4481, XX Corps, GS, Feb.-Apr.1918.

[20]Gullett papers, AWM40/72, 'Personal Note'.

[21]WO106 42, C3/14b, 'Strategical Part I', May 1906 [possibly 1910].

[22]There is an interesting study of the railway in W.Ochsewald *The Hijaz Railroad* (1980).

[23]Both Hubert Young, *The Independent Arab* (1933) ch.6 & Lord Birdwood, *Nuri As-Said* (1959) ch.iv have accounts of the Arab side of the operations. The Young and Akaba papers (at LHCMA, partial copies at St Antony's Oxford) provide crucial reports and letters (mainly by Dawnay) on Arab strategy in early-1918.

orff offensives did not have enough strength to move in and both take and hold the area; secondly, the two raids to occupy Amman stood little chance of success as the planning of the raids was flawed.

General Allenby's spring 1918 advance in Palestine to the line Tulkeram-Nablus, which was to have followed on from the Trans-Jordan raids, was delayed until September 1918, as he had to supply France from March 1918 with an inordinate number of his troops.[24] This meant that securing the land across the River Jordan would not be part of a co-ordinated plan by which the E.E.F. would also advance along the coastal plain. The danger from the Ludendorff offensives meant that the E.E.F. lost two complete infantry divisions (the 52nd and 74th), while four were left with a core of three British battalions (the 10th, 53rd, 60th and 75th). In Palestine, a British infantry division had twelve battalions in three brigades, and from the spring of 1918 nine of these battalions were Indian. Only the 54th Division was not made up to strength with nine Indian battalions. Allenby's yeomanry were also sent to France. The Indian units that replaced those British units going to France were not properly trained, and some had had no training at all. The consequence was that a large amount of reorganisation was needed.[25]

On 27 March 1918 Allenby had been told to, 'adopt a policy of active defence in Palestine'.[26] The first Trans-Jordan raid had started on 21 March, and while the magnitude of the reverse in France was unexpected, Allenby through his correspondence with Robertson would have known that his was very much a front to supply reinforcements for France. In this context, to launch two raids — the official nomenclature for two multi-divisional attacks — seems like a mistake. That the raids did fail seems to have surprised Allenby. John Shea, the commander of the 60th Division which was heavily involved in both raids, wrote to Archibald Wavell in 1939 on Allenby's dismay after the second raid saying how he, 'never saw him like that before or since'.[27] This is undoubtedly a more accurate assessment of Allenby's feelings than the comments of Chauvel (*vide supra* p.96). After the raids Allenby made the most of the fact that the Turks kept their Fourth Army east of the Jordan River, as do accounts of the intelligence operations in Palestine, but like the deceptions employed at the third battle of

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[24]This short advance into northern Samaria was Allenby's main objective (see WO158/621, minutes of C-in-C conference, GHQ, 5 Apr.1918; copy in WO95/4472).

[25]For the lack of training see L/MIL/17/5/3923. diary no.27694, C-in-C India to Sec WO, 9 Apr.1918 & *ibid.*, diary no.29355, Sec. WO to C-in-C India, 13 Apr.1918. Also Wavell, *Palestine Campaigns*, p.183.

[26]CAB25/41, WO to Allenby, 27 Mar.1918. Wilson on 23 March had telegraphed Allenby to get units ready for France (Wilson papers, diaries, 23 Mar.1918).

[27]Allenby papers, 6/IX-X/40-41, Shea to Wavell 10 May 1939[?].

Gaza, these ruses were tangential to the fact that E.E.F. operational planning was not what it should have been.[28]

The conclusion is that Allenby's military reasons for launching the raids, while convincing at the time, were, in fact, misplaced. As for the political promotion of the Arabs this does not seem to have been a serious consideration in Allenby's decision to attack. Allenby saw the Arabs as a having some military usefulness, but he was aware that the small size of their army greatly restrained their value. Having Feisal in Trans-Jordan and Syria was to help Britain alter the Sykes-Picot agreement, but it seems most doubtful that this alone would have made Allenby attack across the River Jordan. Alec Hill, in his biography of Chauvel, makes this point writing that, 'Pressure from London failed to move Allenby, who was determined to improve his positions and consolidate his right flank'.[29]

The Arabs alone could not defeat the Ottoman army as, with the dubious exception of the battle of Tafilah in January 1918, the Hashemite forces were not able to fight the Turks in set-piece battles.[30] Feisal was reliant on Allenby's E.E.F. and in the autumn of 1918 the Turks were crushed and Feisal allowed to occupy Damascus. Once the extent of the Turkish defeat at the battle of Megiddo was evident, Allenby, from 25-26 September 1918, ordered his forces on to Damascus, and dutifully told them to avoid the city if possible. Allenby only accommodated the political wishes of the Arabs once he had routed the Turks at the battle of Megiddo. Reinforcing the argument that Allenby genuinely exaggerated Turkish strength, the extent and ease with which the Turkish front collapsed after Megiddo surprised him. Lt. Frank Brayne, to become the deputy political officer at Aleppo 1918-20, was with the Indian cavalry at Megiddo, and complained in his diary about the poor maps and information given out for Syria and Lebanon: 'We weren't supposed to get beyond the line Acre, Nazareth, Saffed [now Israeli town of Zefat], so everything N[orth] of that was improvised'.[31] The reason for this was that Allenby's primary objective was the occupation of northern Palestine to the foot of Mount Hermon.

General Allenby hoped to be able to occupy Galilee and achieve the objective of reaching Mount Hermon by the summer of 1918, but the removal of troops to France made this impossible. Extending the Arab Revolt was not the primary reason behind the battle of Megiddo, and neither was it the motivation for launching the Trans-Jordan raids earlier in the year. During the raids attempts

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[28]For intelligence see G.Aston, *Secret Service* (1930) chs.xvi-xxv.

[29]Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse*, p.142.

[30]For Lawrence's report on the battle of Tafilah see M.Brown (ed), *Secret Despatches from Arabia* (1991) pp.175-179. Aldington, *Lawrence of Arabia*, pp.215-221, argues that Lawrence inflated what happened at Tafilah.

[31]Brayne papers, Mss Eur F152/18, diary, 28 Oct.1918.

were made to spread the Hashemites' uprising, and as part of this special orders went out to the E.E.F. troops to act more tactfully when dealing with the local populace. While these special orders are an indication of a political dimension to the E.E.F.s operations, they do not signify that spreading the Arab Revolt into the Amman area was the reason for the Trans-Jordan raids. The Trans-Jordan raids had their origin within the staff of the E.E.F., and the planning and execution of the raids were bungled. Apart from some assistance from the Beni Sakhr tribe which was expected at the second raid, the E.E.F. took little notice of the Arabs as a military force, although after the raids the lack of Arab help was used as a scapegoat for what were mistakes on the part of the British.

William Yale, America's special envoy with the E.E.F., reported back to Leland Harrison at the State Department in Washington that if the Arabs had been enemies they, 'would have been very dangerous to the British in their advance threatening the long line of communications of the British with their bases; and who as friends have proved a great aggravation to the Turks, and have protected the British flanks'.[32] Direct contact with the E.E.F. would undoubtedly have increased the military potential of Feisal's army, and the Arabs' potential to become a more powerful force would have influenced G.H.Q.s planning. The Arabs on their own had been unable to dislodge the Turks from Amman and thus link up with the British forces in Palestine, and needed E.E.F. assistance to achieve this goal.

Reginald Wingate, writing to Robertson, voiced his concerns that the Hedjaz Arabs might 'go home', which would mean that, 'the likelihood of the Syrians and the Northern tribesmen moving will be small and the Turks will have little anxiety as to the safety of their railway to Palestine'.[33] If the E.E.F. had cleared the Turkish Fourth Army from the Amman area it might have been that the Arab Revolt would have spread north into the Jebel Druze. Had this happened the Turks' position would have been perilous as their vital rail junction at Deraa would have been threatened. Because the E.E.F. failed in its attempt to take and hold Amman none of these benefits materialised. British grand strategy was such that Allenby's troops were taken away for service in France before the Arab Revolt could be developed in the Amman area, and the result was that the Turks along the Hedjaz railway held out until the war's end. Wingate's assertion that the, 'Arabs may yet — in a fit of enthusiasm — take Medina and scupper the Turks there', was excessively hopeful, and ignored Feisal's reliance on the E.E.F.[34]

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[32]Yale papers, box 1: file 2, report no.2, 5 Nov.1917, p.16.
[33]WO106/718, Wingate to Robertson, 11 Sept.1917.
[34]*Ibid.*

Colonel Andrew, on Allenby's staff in the war, wrote in 1955 how, 'had the Arabs not been enlisted on the British side, they in conjunction with the Turks would have constituted a very real threat to Allenby's right flank'.[35] This is a fair statement, and while the Arabs were not always successful in fighting the Turks, for the small outlay in money, arms, and some officers and men attached to the N.A.A., having Feisal on the side of the E.E.F. was money well spent. The Arabs were to distract the Turks, and they were not expected to fight the regular units of the Ottoman army. In November 1917 Wingate pointed out in a note to the Foreign Office that: 'A review of the total expenditure involved in connection with our whole Arab policy in comparison with the political and military results attained will amply justify a moderate outlay in order to achieve complete success'.[36] Colonel Brémond's claim that Lawrence was, 'Un homme qui représénte deux cent mille livres sterling' seems accurate as the British were financing Feisal with some £200,000 per month.[37]

To attack Amman was a central part of Allenby's (and not Smuts' or Feisal's) long-term strategy to occupy Palestine and defeat the three Ottoman armies facing his force. Writing to the military correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph* in June 1918, Allenby remarked how he had to, 'keep troops all the summer, on the Jordan, as I have to control its crossings and to secure command of the Dead Sea. Otherwise my Arab allies on the Hedjaz railway would be abandoned to the Turks.'[38] Allenby's admission to Henry Wilson was that if his right flank were turned by an Arab defeat his position would be 'untenable'.[39] This would result in the E.E.F. having to retreat and, 'you can imagine what effect such a withdrawal would have on the population of Egypt'.[40] With the worry that the war would continue beyond 1918 there were wider and more indirect military reasons for the E.E.F. wanting to join up with Feisal's Northern Arab Army and if not increase, at least maintain, Feisal's force. What is not apparent is that the Trans-Jordan raids were the best means of achieving this. The analysis at the end of this chapter shows that the raids did more to harm than help the Arab cause.

The main reason for the failure of the raids was that of poor planning by the British coupled with being out-fought by the Turks. Paradoxically, that the E.E.F. failed was not without benefit, in that with the call from France the E.E.F. would not have had enough troops to hold land across the River Jordan, and the N.A.A. would have been unable to hold it alone. Chauvel made this point to

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[35]Allenby papers, 7/4/3, Andrew to Pollitzer, 24 Jan 1955.
[36]FO141/668/4332, 'Hijaz military operations 1917-19', Wingate to FO, 15 Nov.1917.
[37]E.Brémond, La Hedjaz dans la Guerre Mondiale (1931) p.9.
[38]Battine papers (at IWM), 90/37/1, Allenby to Battine, 7 June 1918.
[39]Wilson papers, HHW2/33A/7, Allenby to Wilson, 15 June 1918.
[40]*Ibid.*

Gullett when he observed that had the Trans-Jordan raids, 'been successful, the result would have been that we should have had to hold on to the ground gained, as well as to our already long line, throughout the summer, with the constant menace of an attack down both sides of the Jordan'.[41]

General Allenby, however, seems to have thought that the Turks would quickly collapse, and this optimism was to have costly consequences as the men of the E.E.F. fought to capture Amman at the end of a tenuous supply line. All in all both raids exhibit a peculiar mix of confusion and hopefulness that makes elucidation difficult. It is with the execution of the Trans-Jordan raids that criticism can be levelled at Allenby. Allenby's methodical and step-by-step planning up to the Trans-Jordan raids, and afterwards at Megiddo, was absent at the Trans-Jordan raids. (Allenby's wariness in the spring of 1918 would have been justified.) While Smuts' visit, and Lloyd George's hopes, spurred Allenby on, the decision to attack across the Jordan was Allenby's, and the poor planning of the raids was the work of his staff officers. To attack when troops would have to be transferred to France was not sensible. It has been shown that Allenby had good reasons for wanting to occupy Amman, but like Lloyd George's strategical schemes discussed earlier in this thesis, there was a limit to what was achievable. One explanation why Allenby attacked at such an inopportune moment can be found in a message from Henry Wilson to Sackville-West at the Supreme War Council when the C.I.G.S. said how it, 'must also be remembered that when General Allenby conceived the plan for this [1st T-J] raid, and at the time operations were commenced, the German offensive in France had not assumed a critical phase'.[42]

General Allenby's attitude towards the Arabs from when he assumed command to the war's end was positive, and far from being hidebound. Allenby's wish to use the Arabs as best as he could was a sign of his relative open-mindedness, and while he was aware that it would be his regular troops who would do the main fighting and be the decisive military force, Allenby was still eager to involve Feisal's force. At Megiddo Allenby placed emphasis on the military value of the N.A.A. in harrying the Turkish Fourth Army, although some of Allenby's later praise of Feisal's force had more to do with politeness towards an ally than historical fact. In correspondence dealing with the annoyance that many Australians felt at the post-war embellishment of the value of the Arab operations, Crayton Burns remarked how had, 'Allenby's final victories not been so decisive, Lawrence and his Arabs might have been of some assistance in

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[41]Gullett papers, AWM40/97, notes by Chauvel on ch.xxxv.

[42]CAB25/41, Maurice (for CIGS) to Sackville-West, 1 Apr.1918, 'Circumstances which limited success of Amman Raid', p.3.

preventing the enemy from regrouping at Deraa'.[43] Burns' comment is indicative of Allenby's parochial attitude to the value of the Arabs to his campaign, and does lead to a conclusion that *militarily* the Arabs were not a decisive factor in the Palestine campaign. The more so as the British were never able to establish good overland connections with Feisal's force and so increase his offensive capabilities. Allenby wanted to use Feisal's small force to best effect, but this should be set within all the other pressing concerns with which the commander of an expeditionary force was faced. Allenby would have known how the Hashemites were to be used politically, but this factor was a wider one which had little bearing on his campaign. At the three major actions analysed in this thesis: the third battle of Gaza, the Trans-Jordan raids and the battle of Megiddo, Allenby did his best to oblige Feisal's political aspirations but only once he had commenced operations. It was really after the war that the Arab side of the campaign assumed a tangible political importance, and was not simply a subsidiary of the E.E.F.s main campaign in Palestine west of the River Jordan.

The explanation for the Trans-Jordan raids can be found in the above mix of military requirements, coupled with a secondary factor of long-term political planning. The impetus behind the raids came from Allenby, who from December 1917 felt that by attacking across the River Jordan he could obtain benefits for future operations. Why did the raids fail? How did tactics affect the outcome? How did the raids relate to the politics involved whereby British officers were helping extend the Arab Revolt? The political dimension of the Arab Revolt presages the next chapter which shows how the Hashemites were allowed to occupy Damascus and so consummate their rebellion against their Sultan.

The First Trans-Jordan raid, 21 March-2 April 1918 (see maps 2 & 6)

To stop the Turks using the Hejaz railway to reinforce their Amman front, their line from Damascus to Medina needed to be interdicted. This could be done either by the Arabs, or by the E.E.F. If it were to be the E.E.F., then they would have to move on the line before the Turks could rail in sufficient reinforcements to prevent the fall of Amman. In January 1918 the Arabs had taken Tafilah, which the Turks subsequently took back, and then, on 18 March, the Arabs reoccupied the town as the first Trans-Jordan raid according to one account, 'caused the withdrawal of this Turkish mobile column'.[44] This is inconsistent as the first raid did not begin until 21 March, and Skander Bey, on the staff of the Fourth Army, was more accurate when he wrote that he 'spared no efforts to

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[43]AWM27/113.31[2], correspondence Col Treloar to Bean, 10 Apr.1950, encl. 'AIF Postscript to the Lawrence Legend' by Burns.

[44]L/MIL/17/16/13, 'Summary of the Hejaz Revolt', GS WO, 31 Aug.1918, p.5.

bring back the troops which were being wasted' trying to take Tafilah.[45] The Marquess of Anglesey's volume on cavalry operations in Palestine also asserts that Allenby's attack on Amman was designed partly to force the withdrawal of the Turkish Tafilah expedition.[46] The evidence shows that the Turks were withdrawing from Tafilah anyway, and it seems that the British and the Arabs did not combine their tactics, and that this allowed the Turks to deal with their enemies separately.

The *Official History* also gives the impression of co-ordinated strategy, and exaggerates the Arabs' military strength:-

> It has been shown that it was Sir Edmund Allenby's intention, after gaining a front broad enough for the purpose in the valley of the Jordan, to force the passage of the river and destroy the Hejaz Railway at 'Amman. One of the chief reasons which had led him to his determination was the success gained during the winter [of 1917] by his Arab allies in the country south-east and east of the Dead Sea.[47]

What exactly was the success to which the official war history refers to? The *Official History* lists the series of raids on the Hedjaz railway, and the capture of Tafilah which meant that the, 'moment was therefore ripe for a British invasion of Trans-Jordan'.[48] This seems like a justification *post facto* as the E.E.F. at the time took little account of the Arabs. A more reasoned assessment would be that limited Arab success encouraged plans that Allenby had been developing since late-1917. One wonders if the British had much notion of what was really happening over the River Jordan. If G.H.Q. were launching an attack on the basis of sketchy successes by the N.A.A. in early-1918 they must have had poor and incomplete intelligence on the Arabs' achievements and abilities, and the Turks' strength. It seems more likely that the E.E.F. was simply hoping for the best. The 'regular' element of the N.A.A. was two weak brigades made up of a disparate group of, 'volunteers, former prisoners of war, deserters, escapees, and others'.[49] Eliezer Tauber's assessment of 8,000 regular and 17,000 irregulars troops in Feisal's and Ali's armies in April 1918 seems very high.[50] A force of this size would easily have outnumbered the Turkish Fourth Army; indeed, probably would have exceeded the total Turkish rifle strength of their three

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[45]Skander Bey, 'The Battles of Salt, Aman and Jordan from Turkish Sources', *RUSI Journal*, May 1924, p.335.
[46]*A History of the British Cavalry 1816-1919, Volume 5, Egypt, Palestine and Syria, 1914-1919* (1994) p.218.
[47]Vol.ii, p.328.
[48]*Ibid.*
[49]E.Tauber, *The Arab Movements in World War I* (1993) p.101 (see appendix 1 also).
[50]*Ibid.*, p.114.

armies stationed in Palestine. Lt.-Col. Alan Dawnay's estimate of 3,000 'imperfectly trained' troops seems accurate.[51]

Tafilah, some twenty miles west of the Hejaz railway, was a town of little strategic significance. When the Turks organised themselves they easily retook it. The Turks' concern in 1918 was to hold on to the holy city of Medina, and they did this with a relatively small outlay in resources. The Germans encouraged the Turks to withdraw from the Hedjaz as it was militarily insignificant, but the Turks were aware of the religious significance of Mecca and Medina and wanted to keep a force in the area.[52] To say that the Turks 'played the part mapped out for them by Col. Lawrence, of expending their men and resources to no advantage' by keeping the railway to Medina open is mistaken.[53] Indeed, the side which needlessly wasted their effort in early-1918 was the E.E.F. by blundering into the raids across the River Jordan. The morale factor involved in the loss of another Muslim holy site worried the Turks, and so they held on to Medina until 1919. Philip Graves' (of *The Times*) assessment that the Arabs kept 50,000 Turkish combatants out of Palestine is a serious misreading of Turkish strategy.[54] It is also a remarkable transformation of two weak divisions in Medina and on the Hedjaz railway, into a force more than twice the size to that deployed by the Turks at the third battle of Gaza. Lawrence makes the statement in his article 'Evolution of a Revolt' that as the Arabs controlled the deserts of the Hedjaz 'why bother about Medina', which ignores that the Arabs were quite unable to take the city.[55]

A small mobile column commanded by Alan Dawnay succeeded, in late-April 1918, in permanently cutting the Hedjaz railway. The line, however, was ripped up south of Maan, so Allenby's flank was under threat just as it had always been. Indeed, the Turks may have benefited from Dawnay's destruction as Medina still held out, but the Fourth Army did not have to concern itself sending occasional supply trains south. Accounts of the blowing up of Ottoman trains and railway track mislead as to the strategic significance of these demolition efforts.[56] The Turks quickly replaced damaged line, often simply clamping bits of wood onto damaged sections of rail and then running their trains.[57] The Turks also had a surfeit of spare track as they had been planning to extend their railway to Mecca. N.N.E. Bray, a British officer with the Arab army, wrote in his account

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[51]Akaba papers, I/M18, Dawnay to CGS EEF, 1 May 1918 p.2 (also in FO882/7).
[52]Aldington, *Lawrence*, p.180.
[53]Bowman-Manifold, *An Outline of the Egyptian and Palestine Campaigns 1914-1918* (1922) pp.94-95.
[54]Liddell Hart papers, 9/13/8, Graves to LH, 17 Nov 1933.
[55]From *Army Quarterly*, October 1920, p.58 (this author is critical of the Arabs' military part in Allenby's campaign in letter to the *Times Literary Supplement*, 9 Sept.1994).
[56]See 'Demolitions under Fire' in Brown, *Secret Despatches from Arabia*, pp.243-249.
[57]W0157/745, DMC, 'Operations of A & NZ Mtd Div 23/3-2/4/18, 27 Mar.1918, p.2.

of the campaign how in, 'spite of the fact that the railway was exposed to constant attack throughout its length of 800 miles from Damascus to Medina...[the Turks] repaired the damage with extraordinary persistency and commendable speed, and kept it working'.[58] If the Arabs could not seriously disrupt the Turkish railway and troops in the Trans-Jordan, and if the E.E.F. could not organise a strong enough force — due to demands from France — to go and do it themselves, the E.E.F. and the N.A.A. should have remained where they were in the spring of 1918 and not attacked. The Turkish force on the Hedjaz railway was not the threat that Allenby believed, and probably could have been isolated and left to wither.

Between the battle of Tafilah and mid-April 1918, the N.A.A. did not carry out any serious operations. Therefore, as men of the 60th (London) Division swam the flooded River Jordan on the night of 21 March to establish pontoon bridges, it was the E.E.F. who would have to capture Amman. The operation was staggeringly complacent and made little or no effort to use the small force of Feisal in a co-ordinated manner to help the E.E.F. Turkish intelligence seemed to have been aware of what was impending, and the Turks did their best to build up their Fourth Army.[59] An Australian Sergeant of the 12th Australian Light Horse Regiment, taken prisoner on 1 May, remembered that the, 'Turkish authorities state to have known our weakness'.[60] In Gullett's papers he supports this view that there was an intelligence error recording that:-

> The first two [an attack on the coastal plain and the 1st T-J raid] failed chiefly because of G.H.Q.'s extraordinary leakage of information. The first principles of surprise attack were neglected. Everyone in Palestine and as far back as Cairo, knew of these operations which depended absolutely upon secrecy, two or three weeks before they were carried out. The second venture East of Jordan was more jealously guarded, but even then the coming attack was fairly common knowledge.[61]

The power of the E.E.F., which would have to be used quickly before troops were sent to France, might have provided compensation for this security error. But heavy rains turned the two just passable routes to Amman into muddy and barely passable tracks. Allenby's staff should have known that bad weather was likely at this time of the year. The E.E.F.s air supremacy, and intelligence from friendly Arabs, should have shown that the roads in this area could only

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[58]Bray, *Shifting Sands* (1934) p.142.

[59]The *Australian Official History* (p.548) says certain Arabs betrayed the operation. Skander Bey, *art.cit.*, is good on the Turkish build up in March 1918.

[60]AWM30/B2 11, Sgt Halpin.

[61]Gullett papers, AWM40 77, 'Allenby'. In personal correspondence with the author, Alec Hill (author of *Chauvel*) also points out that there was too much 'loose talk'.

take artillery under favourable weather conditions. The *New Zealand Official History* (ch.vii) is particularly good in describing the harsh weather during the raid, and its summary of the inadequate state of the force that attacked Amman conveys the almost impossible task that the troopers pushing on Amman faced.

The road from Shunet Nimrin to Es Salt had, 'been cut out of the sides of the hills, having a very high cliff on one side and a deep gorge on the other...It was thus impossible to get off the road'.[62] Once Es Salt had been taken on 25 March the two divisions involved in the raid: 60th and Australian and New Zealand Mounted plus the Imperial Camel Corps (a brigade), moved on Amman via Suweileh and Ain es Sir. In Wavell's account of the campaign he points out that 'it was found impossible to take wheels' up onto the Moab plateau.[63] The road onto Amman was little better, as the commander of the 2nd Australian Light Horse Brigade pointed out to his wife: 'I had to turn our guns back as the road which had been reported good...was an almost impassable goat track...I thought sometimes that we would never get through'.[64] The war diary of the Camel Corps recorded how the unit was, 'heavily handicapped in not having artillery support being impossible to get them up'.[65] For four days the E.E.F. fought to capture Amman with only 'four small pack mountain guns'[66] for support: 'we had to make one big attack at 2 o'clock in the morning in blinding rain and cold as ice. We had a good many casualties'.[67] The number of men lost is evidence of the difficulty of the operation; the *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during World War One* for the three months March to April 1918, gives a 'prisoner of war and missing' figure of 543.[68]

The main Turkish position just south of Amman was on a 3039ft hill, and to assault this dominating feature the E.E.F. had just one pack 12-pdr. to provide fire support for the attack.[69] The photograph in Arslan Bakig's picture volume on Amman of hill 3039, taken from the Citadel north of the hill, illustrates the dominance of this feature.[70] Amman's natural position within a ring of hills made the task of the exhausted and weakened men of the E.E.F. a daunting one. The force attacking Amman was simply not strong enough to break through the Turkish lines.

To add to the E.E.F.s difficulties, while the railway line north and south of Amman was cut by raiding parties, none of the major tunnels or viaducts were

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[62]WO95/4551, Aust Mtd Div, GS Apr.1918, 'Ops East of Jordan/Es Salt', 29/4-4/5/18, p.6.
[63]Wavell, *The Palestine Campaigns* (1928) p.181.
[64]Ryrie papers, MS986/485-643, letter to wife, 10 Apr 1918.
[65]AWM4[11/9], 4th Bn ICC, roll 179, 30 Mar.1918.
[66]*New Zealand Official History*, p.197.
[67]Ryrie papers, MS986/485-643, letter to wife, 10 Apr.1918.
[68]*Statistics of Military Effort* (1922) p.280.
[69]*New Zealand Official History*, p.202.
[70]*Amman: Yesterday and Today* (1983) plate 5.

damaged, thus, 'the enemy kept bringing up fresh reinforcements from Damascus [so] we had to pull out'.[71] Henry Wilson recorded in his diary the following about the raid on Amman: 'It really does appear to me that we have had bad luck in our weather'.[72] This was bad luck that could have been foreseen, and for those on the fighting end the consequences were more serious.

Those unlucky enough to become casualties had to make the journey back strapped to horses, or in cacolet stretchers attached to camels; balanced against a wounded man on the other side of the camel, the hapless casualty would be bounced for mile after mile against the side of the camel: many seriously wounded preferred to walk.[73] The war diary of Brig.-Gen Granville Ryrie's brigade detailed the assault on Amman thus: 'Attack against AMMAN launched but owing to the difficulties met with in the way of weather and ground conditions, the enemys great natural facilities for defence, their superiority of machine gun fire, with the additional assistance of field guns — which we lacked — little progress was made'.[74] This skilful use of automatic fire was also commented upon in the war diary of the 7th Australian Light Horse Regiment with, 'sangars bristling with machine guns from which an incessant and deadly fire was poured in on us as we stood up or lay down in the barley'.[75] The Turkish defenders of Amman exhibited skill and tenacity as they fought on while temporarily isolated by the cutting of the railway line, and while they held out, the Turkish high command had the line fixed and quickly railed in reinforcements.

What would have happened if Amman had fallen? The E.E.F. would have had difficulty holding on to the area, and there would have been Turkish garrisons north towards Deraa, and south towards Maan. The N.A.A. was a small military force stationed south-east of the Dead Sea, and it was optimistic to think that the E.E.F. could hold on to Amman long enough for Feisal to march north, take, and maintain control. The politics of the campaign show that the E.E.F. had expectations of how the Arab Revolt could be spread north into the area of the Trans-Jordan raids. The evidence at the end of this chapter indicates that many of the inhabitants of the Trans-Jordan preferred Turkish rule, and their hostility to the E.E.F. and Feisal could have created problems. The sedentary population had a long-standing fear of the depredations of the nomadic tribes. The tribes of the area were waiting for a Turkish defeat before showing their allegiance to Feisal, and only the E.E.F. could defeat the Turks. As Malcolm Yapp points out, the

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[71]Ryrie papers, MS986/485-643, Ryrie to wife, 10 Apr.1918.
[72]Wilson papers, HHW2/33A/3, Wilson to Allenby, 9 May 1918.
[73]There are photographs of cacolets in I Jones, *The Australian Light Horse* (1987) pp.84, 108. See also *Australian Official History*, p.577.
[74]WO95/4538, HQ 2ALH Bde, WD 27 Mar.1918, 20.15hrs.
[75]AWM4[10/12], 7 ALH Regt, WD (Amman), roll 162, 28 Mar.1918.

Huwaytat were the 'only Jordanian tribe to take part in the Arab revolt', and Yapp adds that Amman, the E.E.F.s objective, 'was a Circassian settlement'.[76] The Circassians, transplanted from the eastern shores of the Black Sea by the Turks in the 19th century, saw their future as lying with the Ottoman régime. Tariq Tell describes the Circassians of Amman as 'fanatically Ottoman', adding that, 'the pattern of participation in the Revolt seems to be of scattered initiatives in support of the Sharifian cause...with collective action in its favour being confined to the Huwaytat and the villagers in the environs of Tafila...it is the incidence of food shortage and the threat of famine which best explains support for the Revolt.' [77]

The E.E.F. had to deal with a 'tribal brawl' at Suweileh between Christians and Circassians as they moved up reinforcements for the first raid, and this was hardly an auspicious start to the 'liberation' of the Trans-Jordan by Feisal and the E.E.F.[78] These local differences would have been a serious consideration for the numbers of E.E.F. troops required for garrison duties across the River Jordan: garrison troops which the E.E.F. did not have.

Franz von Papen, with the Fourth Army, remembered in his *Memoirs* how the Turks:-

> maintained excellent relations not only with the nearby Arab tribes, whose sheikhs often visited Es Salt to make their obeisances...but also with Emir Feisal and Ibn Saud...Feisal's contacts went right back to Damascus with the great Cemal [presumably Djemal Pasha], and we had very much the impression that his basic intention was not to find himself on the losing side.[79]

Feisal's pragmatism was understandable, as was Britain's desire to maintain Feisal, as he helped weaken the Turkish Fourth Army. What is not so easy to explain is that in Britain's search for a political and military ally, she relied on a confederate who would have had difficulty ruling east of the Jordan. At the battle of Megiddo Feisal played his part very well: the Arabs helped to some extent militarily, and as the E.E.F. moved on Damascus, Feisal was a valuable political ally. This clever mix of military and political, carefully connected to the E.E.F.s actual campaign, was sadly absent from the Trans-Jordan raids.

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[76]Yapp, *The Near East since the First World War* (1991) p.140.

[77]Tell, unpublished draft chapter sent to author 'Between Ottomans & Arabists: War, Revolt and the Making of Transjordan 1914-24', pp7-8.

[78]*Official History*, vol.ii, p.339. In April 1995 fighting broke out between students from Salt and their Circassian counterparts at the University of Jordan (*Middle East Reporter*, 13 May 1995, p.9). One Salt student told the Circassians 'This is my country. You are just guests here'.

[79]Von Papen, *Memoirs* (1952) p.80.

At the first raid the E.E.F. did not use the N.A.A., but relied on their own strength. If this was the plan it would have been proper to devise an operation that was practical, not only to defeat the Turks at Amman, but to realise that Feisal would need continued assistance to maintain his presence around Amman: assistance which the E.E.F., to be used as a reserve for France, would have had difficulty providing. Logistics would also have been seriously hampered by the 400 metres below sea level depth of Jordan Valley which made a railway link impossible, more especially with the height of the hills either side of the River Jordan. Gullett's feeling was that the Arabs, 'complain bitterly that we sold them a pup over Amman which we did'.[80] The consequence of the E.E.F.s failure was not only to demoralise Feisal's force and keep wavering Arab tribes on the fence, but the Christian population of Es Salt, who had welcomed the advancing British, had to leave their homes and march back to refugee camps in Palestine. Lt.-Col. A.J. Mills of the Imperial Camel Corps retreated with the Christian population and recorded in his diary the following account of the retreat from the failed attempt to capture Amman:-

> All along the way we passed the poor unfortunate refugees, trecking, walking, dragging, themselves along. Men, boys, girls, old men, babies, all sorts and ages. Poor beggars. Some got a lift in limbers. I took one or two of the kiddies on my saddle...Howard had one and many of the boys had kiddies on their camels. The kid I had was Estell age about 4 or less...Estell's feet were bleeding, she went to sleep in my arms.[81]

The 60th Division's orders were to hold Es Salt, which would have given the E.E.F. a base for future contacts with the Arabs.[82] Allenby must have been bitterly disappointed at his first serious defeat in Palestine, and General Shea remembered how: 'I believe there is no doubt that Lord Allenby intended to hold Es Salt and Amman, if only temporarily and he wanted particularly to effect a junction with the Sherifian forces'.[83] The retreat from Amman was so total that Es Salt was evacuated, and another raid had to be launched to occupy it. Considering that the second raid was to be a repeat of the first, one is reminded of the military aphorism that it is success, and not failure, that should be reinforced.

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[80]Gullett papers, AWM40 66, 'Jordan Valley'.
[81]Mills papers, 1DRL/501, part 2, diary 1 Apr.1918.
[82]WO95/4522, Aust & NZ Mtd Div, order 119, 19 Mar.1918, p.1. 'to fight its [60th Division] way to ES SALT and secure the place'.
[83]Shea papers, 6 2a, p 25.

The Second Trans-Jordan raid 30 April-4 May 1918

General Allenby's chief of general staff wrote to Chauvel on 20 April 1918 that the, 'Commander-in-Chief intends to gain control of the country east of the JORDAN contained in the area GIZR ED DAMIE, ES SALT, AMMAN, KISSIR Station, MADEBA, DEAD SEA'.[84] Allenby's orders continued by saying that once Amman was captured Chauvel would at once, 'prepare for operations northward with a view to advancing rapidly on DERAA'.[85] (Lt.-Col. Gribbon, in the Supreme War Council, in February 1918 also mentions that Deraa was a possible objective for the Trans-Jordan raids.[86]) If Deraa had been taken, the Seventh and Eighth Ottoman Armies in Palestine would have been isolated, especially if the Arab Revolt were successfully moved north, and as the German Franz von Papen noted, 'we should all be in a trap'.[87] However, an advance on Deraa would only have occurred if the Turkish Fourth Army collapsed, and this was most unlikely with the plan adopted for the second Trans-Jordan raid. The objective of the second raid seems to have been the same as the first — to secure Amman — and like the first raid, the second exhibited a marked optimism that the realities of the situation did not warrant. Hill's comment on the second raid seems appropriate, and shows some of the difficulties of understanding all that was going on: 'As Allenby left no memoirs and the war diaries reveal little apart from the orders themselves, it is difficult to explain such disjointed strategy'.[88]

Lt.-Col. Alan Dawnay of the Hejaz Operations section of E.E.F. was instructed by G.H.Q. to go to Feisal's headquarters at Abu Lissan and help organise the N.A.A., and accordingly he left Cairo on 1 April.[89] Feisal's task was twofold: firstly, the 'extension northward of the tribal movement east of the DEAD SEA', and, secondly, the 'destruction of the enemy's last Composite Force and the capture of MAAN'.[90] To spread the Arab Revolt Feisal was to rely on 'the action of the Tribes', and this will be analysed at the end of this chapter. For the capture of Maan 'with a view to the permanent isolation of all Turkish forces' south of Maan Feisal was to use his Northern Arab Army.[91]

Alan Dawnay arrived at Abu Lissan on 7 April and had to tell Feisal of the failure of the first Trans-Jordan raid. This failure disappointed Feisal and Dawnay had to stress the 'raid' side of the action. What followed from the conference at Feisal's headquarters was the decision to isolate Maan. According

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[84]WO95/4369, WD GS (Ops), GHQ EEF April 1918, appendices, Bols to GOC DMC, 20 Apr.1918 (Z/85/11).
[85]*Ibid.* (Z/85/12).
[86]CAB25/41, 'Notes on Situation in Turkey', verbal from Gribbon, 21 [24?] Feb.1918.
[87]Von Papen, *Memoirs* (1952) p.78.
[88]Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse*, p.145.
[89]See Akaba papers I/M18, by A.Dawnay, 1 May 1918 on his mission.
[90]Akaba papers, I/M14, report by A.Dawnay, 15 Feb.1918, pp.1-2.
[91]*Ibid.*

to Hubert Young's account, Dawnay's mission was to delay Feisal's attack until late-April when it could be linked in with Allenby's attack.[92] Dawnay's own detailed account is that he tried to stop the N.A.A. from attacking the town of Maan: 'I asked him [Feisal] with what prospect of success he considered that his imperfectly trained force of less than 3,000 men, ill-supplied with food and lacking in munitions, could hope to attack highly trained regular troops, well supported by artillery and machine guns'.[93]

At the April meeting at Abu Lissan, 'the patience of the Arab officers ran out, and they strongly demanded a direct attack on Ma'an and the end of the tactics of attacking railway stations and tracks'.[94] The N.A.A. was supposedly a unit of the E.E.F., and Feisal a Lt.-Gen. under Allenby's orders, but the chain of command to the Arabs seems to have been weak. At Abu Lissan Arab officers such as Nuri as-Said and Mawlud Mukhlis argued against Feisal and Jafaar al-Askari (who were backing the British) saying that 'the British only wanted to impede the progress of the Arab revolt'.[95] Because of the lack of unity and discipline in the Arab camp, as measured in an order from above strictly obeyed, the 'path to a direct attack on Ma'an was opened'.[96] Such an attack, as Dawnay pointed out, was bound to fail, and when the Arabs did attack Maan the Turks repulsed them.

Alan Dawnay had wanted the N.A.A. to cut the Hedjaz railway, 'as an essential preliminary to the main operation'.[97] The meeting at Abu Lissan on 7-8 April resulted in a three-pronged assault being accepted. Dawnay also led a force of the Egyptian Camel Corps which attacked the line near Mudawera, some 50 miles south of Maan, and permanently ripped up the Hedjaz railway. The main attack was north and south of Maan, and from 15-18 April the Arabs attacked Maan itself. The very success of the initial attacks spurred the N.A.A. on as the Semna position near Maan, 'had fallen so easily and at such small cost, that the Arabs underestimated the difficulty of carrying the much stronger defences of Maan'.[98] Feisal was unable to restrain his relatively undisciplined force, and while the Arabs penetrated to the suburbs of Maan the Turks repulsed them without too much difficulty; especially as the Turks recaptured Jerdun just north of Maan on 17 April and, 'managed to get a pack convoy through to their beleaguered garrison in Maan'.[99]

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[92]Young, *Independent Arab*, p.164 (Young says Allenby was going to attack along the coast later in April).
[93]Akaba papers, I/M18, Dawnay, 1 May 1918, p.2 (also in WO158/634).
[94]E.Tauber, *The Arab Movement in World War I* (1993) pp.129-130.
[95]*Ibid.*
[96]*Ibid.*
[97]Akaba papers, I/M18, Dawnay, 1 May 1918, p.3.
[98]Young, *Independent Arab*, p.167.
[99]Birdwood, *Nuri as-Said* (1959) p.66.

While Dawnay's success was a good example of how to develop the Arab operations, the Maan attack should not have been allowed to go ahead. The achievements of the initial attacks north and south of Maan could have been repeated again, and would have drained the limited resources of the Turkish Fourth Army. To give the Turks a set-piece battle was to play into their hands. The Maan attack should also have been co-ordinated with the second Trans-Jordan raid, but the E.E.F. and the N.A.A. seemed to be operating independently of each other. If the Maan attack had been implemented as the E.E.F. assaulted Amman at the end of March, or when they reoccupied Es Salt on 30 April at the second raid, the Turks would not have had the option of dealing with one enemy force, and then the other. Hedjaz Operations reported to G.H.Q. on 13 April that Dawnay felt that Arab operations were proceeding satisfactorily.[100] Presumably Dawnay thought the Arabs would isolate Maan, and not be encouraged to launch a direct assault. Certainly it was not hard for the Turks, with their railway from Amman open, to move a relief force south. Dawnay's remark that the first raid had caused a break in the line near Amman that would 'take at least three weeks to repair' was a glaring error.[101] The only demolition that might have achieved this would have been the destruction of the major viaduct and tunnels south of Amman, and the E.E.F. could not get to these in the first raid.[102] This meant that the Turkish railway remained open for her to move troops between Amman and Maan and deal with the Arabs and the British in turn.

The independent and disjointed nature of the Arab operations at Maan meant that the one piece of direct Arab help at the second raid was the attempt by the Beni Sakhr tribe to block the Amman to Shunet Nimrin road by way of Ain es Sir to prevent the Turks reinforcing Shunet Nimrin. The assertion of the *Australian Official History* that the, 'Arabs may be dismissed at once. With their customary caution and fear of the Turks, the Beni Sakr tribe...withheld co-operation' is incorrect and unfair.[103] The Beni Sakhr tribe did not attack because their artillery support from the N.A.A. did not turn up.[104] How the E.E.F. expected a small tribal force armed with rifles to block the Ain es Sir road is not apparent. The Ain es Sir road allowed the Turks to support the Shunet Nimrin position, even after Es Salt had fallen for a second time, putting the E.E.F. troops

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[100]WO158/634, part 3, Hedghog to GS GHQ, 13 Apr.1918.

[101]Young papers (at St.Antony's), file 2, note by Young, 21 Apr.1918.

[102]There is a picture of the viaduct in Bean & Gullett (eds), *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Vol.XII: Photographic Record of the War* (1923) plate 632. Caption reads 'This viaduct, together with railway tunnels in the same locality, was the main objective of the British enterprise'. (See map 6 of this thesis.)

[103]*A.O.H.*, p.614.

[104]Young papers, 2, 'How I got two guns out of the Sherifian Army. 1000 miles on a Camel', by Hubert Young, pp.5-6. In *The Independent Arab* (pp.176-180) Young details the confused communication between Allenby and the Beni Sakhr in late-April 1918.

in Es Salt in an isolated position. The Turks improved the track through Ain es Sir after the first raid, but E.E.F. air intelligence should have shown this, especially as the E.E.F. had total air superiority. If the road was good enough to transit sizeable Turkish units then the Beni Sakhr would not be able to interdict it; if the road was still so poor little could pass on it, then the Beni Sakhr would be superfluous. The reason the second raid failed lay within the E.E.F. and within Turkish counter-measures, not within distractions such as whether the Beni Sakhr and the Arabs let the E.E.F. down. It should be remembered that at Maan the Arabs had shown too much enthusiasm, not too little.

The Beni Sakhr were understandably loath to fight a force far superior to themselves. Falls says the undue reliance placed on the support of the Beni Sakhr came about because T.E. Lawrence was away on a mission so, 'G.H.Q. made a mistake in relying on them [the Beni Sakhr]...G.H.Q. seems to have taken a pledge from a sheikh who carried no weight with his people.'[105] Jeremy Wilson, Lawrence's official biographer, also points to the Beni Sakhr as prompting the second raid: 'When Lawrence reached GHQ on May 2nd, he learned to his astonishment that General Bols, Allenby's Chief of Staff, had just launched a further attack on Salt. This had been prompted by Beni Sakhr envoys who had come to the EEF offering Arab help on a large scale.'[106] If true, Bols' decision shows misjudgement, and the evidence points to the origins of the two raids to be within the E.E.F., and not within offers from a small Arab tribal force. If Bols were attacking because of the Beni Sakhr then this was a remarkable misreading of events. Hill's intelligent biography of Chauvel is informative on the role of the Beni Sakhr, and conveys the confusion at the time:-

> It is not unreasonable to assume that the arrangements [to coordinate the second raid with the Beni Sakhr] were made on the notorious 'old boy basis' [i.e. 'arrangements for Arab co-operation with the E.E.F. in 1918 were mainly verbal'[107]] of the next war in the Desert, with the Englishmen failing to grasp either the status or outlook of the strangers with whom they were dealing. Nor did G.H.Q. have any clear idea of the capabilities of the Beni Sakhr. It was their first contact with Beduin and they fitted them into Chauvel's battle without reference to Colonel Lawrence and without informing Captain Hubert Young, Lawrence's liaison officer with the Beni Sakhr. Young has recorded that the leader of the Arabs around Madeba was both perplexed and frightened by G.H.Q.'s reaction to his envoys.[108]

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[105]Bean papers, AWM38/3DRL/7953/item31, Edmonds to Bean, 15 Apr.1929 (encl. notes by Falls).
[106]Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia*, p.499.
[107]Personal correspondence with Alec Hill, 23 Aug.1994.
[108]Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse*, p.145.

Within this confused situation the Turks showed skill in the second raid by defeating the E.E.F. flank guard around 'Red Hill'. Pushed into the hills by the weight of the Turkish attack, the E.E.F. lost two batteries of 13-pdr. guns: the only artillery lost in the campaign. Turkish troops from west of the Jordan crossed the river on a secret pontoon bridge at Mafid Jozele. As Chauvel pointed out: 'The existence of this pontoon bridge was not known until later though the pontoons must have been close handy. They had never been seen by our aeroplanes and, so far as we knew, there was no available crossing short of the bridge at Damieh.'[109] The position of the troops in Es Salt was then made untenable as their one route back to the Jordan via some tracks near the Wadi Arseniyat (i.e. north of the Turks holding out at Shunet Nimrin) was in danger of being cut by the Turks advancing from Mafid Jozele.

The Um esh Shert crossing was protected by E.E.F. troops on the west bank, and the Jisr ed Damieh bridge was seen to be the only other crossing point. For the Turks to have prepared pontoons indicates competence, and knowledge of what the E.E.F. was up to, and as von Sanders recounts, their attack using this secret bridge 'was a complete surprise for the enemy'.[110] The Turks assembled on the west bank of the Jordan the 3rd Cavalry Division, the 24th Division and German Infantry Regiment 146.[111] Turkish troops marched through the night using the track down from Nablus and Beisan and attacked 'immediately on arrival'.[112] The force of the Turkish attack would have been easier to absorb if the Turkish Shunet Nimrin position had fallen. However, the 60th Division was unable to take this position and thus widen the frontage of the attack. Gullett's notes on the Shunet Nimrin assault read very much like accounts on the second battle of Gaza: 'Shunet Nimrin 60th Division attacked about 400 to the battalion, very heavy losses. Division stale when show started and practically finished at end. Had 40 per cent to 50 per cent casualties. Turks had high ground'.[113] The rough terrain of the Trans-Jordan hampered operations; it being impossible, for instance, for the cavalry at Es Salt to move south and take the Shunet Nimrin position from behind even with a track between the two. The E.E.F. should have been aware of these problems, if only from the fact that they had crossed the same terrain in the first raid.

It is difficult not to concur with Gullett's observation that G.H.Q.s, 'policy recently is hard to follow'.[114] Why the E.E.F. employed the tactics it did at the

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[109]Gullett papers, AWM40/97, notes by Chauvel on ch.xxxv.
[110]Von Sanders, *Five Years in Turkey* (1927) p.226.
[111]See *Official History*, vol.ii, p.392 and O.Welsch, 'Cavalry in the Palestine Campaign, *Cavalry Journal*, Vol.XVII, 1927, p.299 for build-up on west bank.
[112]AWM30/B2.11, statement Sgt Halpin (of ALH), made POW 1/5/18.
[113]Gullett papers, AWM40/62, '2nd Es Salt'.
[114]Gullett papers, AWM40/72, 'Personal Note'.

second raid is not an easy question to answer. The N.A.A. was far to the south, and the E.E.F. seem to have been hoping that the Turks would simply collapse. Allenby seems to have been aiming to co-ordinate his Amman attack with an attack on the coast. If so, Gullett is right to draw attention to the singular lack of synchronisation between the two operations. The attack on the coast went ahead on 9 April, but was very much a local affair to improve the tactical position of Bulfin's XXI Corps, and had to be called off because of the lack of success.[115]

There were many advantages to be had from securing the Trans-Jordan for the E.E.F. campaign. But the E.E.F. was unable to defeat the Turks, who fought back, and, 'the crowning folly was the undignified windy scuffle out of Es Salt' for a second time on 3 May 1918.[116] Because of the tactical shortcomings at the two raids the Arabs could not be used to occupy the Trans-Jordan to provide an ally of military and political advantage. Indeed, the failure of the raids was probably more harmful than if the E.E.F. had done nothing, as Lt. Alec Kirkbride, with Prince Abdullah, noted: 'Situation here unsatisfactory. ABDULLAH tells me that he does not mean to move towards KERAK for ten days. Owing to the retirement of the British from ES SALT the MEJALI under KERAIM, and various other small KERAK tribes failed to join him. They want to be supported by a stronger force before breaking with the Turks.'[117] For the Arab revolt to spread it was necessary for the E.E.F. to be successful against the Turks. Powerful Arab leaders like Nuri Shalaan waited to see what would happen: 'For so long as the tribes saw the Turks still established at Maan and Medina, they doubted their defeat and saw no tangible signs of the victory of Feisal'.[118] The failure to secure the Amman area, 'contributed to shake the confidence of the Bedouin tribes in our strength and power. Only a signal victory over the Turco-Germans on the Palestine front can restore our prestige among the Arabs.'[119] In his diary for 26 June 1918 Hankey wrote how Picot had told Sykes that, 'the raids across the Jordan had been a very great mistake politically, and had turned the Arab population of that region against us, as they "got it in the neck" from the Turks — but Allenby won't listen to political considerations'.[120] Allenby's focus was undoubtedly on the military, but without a successful operation across the Jordan little was going to happen with the Arab Revolt, and the two raids stood little chance of succeeding. It now remains to analyse the politics of the Trans-Jordan raids, and relate military operations to political aims.

115*Ibid.* & see also *Official History*, vol.ii, pp.350-57 for details of coastal attack.
116Gullett papers, AWM40/72, 'Personal Note'.
117WO158/638, from Kirkbride (by pigeon), 14 May 1918.
118Bray, *Shifting Sands*, p.142.
119FO800/221, report 15 to Sykes by his secretary (Lt Albina), 15 June 1918, pp.8-9.
120Hankey papers, 1/3 diaries.

Spreading the Arab Revolt

Writing to Joyce in May 1918, Alan Dawnay added the facetious *post script* for Feisal: 'My love and salaams to the Prince of Syria'.[121] The political consequence of Allenby's decision to attack across the Jordan was that Feisal was to be established in Amman and ultimately Syria proper. As part of this policy the E.E.F. received new orders on how to treat the local inhabitants. As the E.E.F. had crossed the Sinai, instructions on what to do with local Bedouin had easily fitted in with the prejudices of the E.E.F. rank and file. Suzanne Brugger's comment that, 'for the men of the Light Horse...Arabs became the object of a sustained hatred' well reflects the feelings of E.E.F. rankers.[122] Bearing in mind the kindness shown by Anzac cameliers at the retreat from Amman, the average E.E.F. soldier did have a disparaging view of Muslim Arabs who were, 'black and dirty, and they smelt...the Australians hardly thought it worth mentioning if a few were killed.'[123] This attitude was nowhere more evident than with the trouble in Cairo and other Egyptian cities with Arabs being attacked, and Australians and New Zealanders were invariably in the forefront of any violence. The non-antipodean troops of the E.E.F. had similar attitudes, but seem to have been more restrained in terms of discipline when dealing with the local people. In September 1918 at Ziza, south of Amman, the Australians cheerfully joined in with the retreating Turkish Composite Force from Maan in shooting at Arabs from the Beni Sakhr tribe, who were attempting, after the battle of Megiddo, to attack the Turkish force.[124] The commander of the 2nd Australian Light Horse Brigade at Ziza, Ryrie, wrote to his wife how it was, 'funny having our prisoners fighting for us'.[125] The respect felt by the E.E.F. towards the bravery of the Turks stood in marked contrast to the contempt shown towards the Arabs, as Gullett noted: 'very little precedent for this campaign i.e. a desert campaign against a civilised enemy. In most desert campaigns the enemy is a savage and sooner or later attacked and was slaughtered by modern weapons. Australians looked upon Jacko [the Turks] as a very decent nigger.'[126] The most extreme example of this attitude came in December 1918 when Australians and New Zealanders, avenging the death of a comrade killed near the village of Surafend in Palestine, beat some forty Arab villagers to death.[127]

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[121] Akaba papers, I/M20, Dawnay to Joyce (with Feisal), 27 May 1918.
[122] Brugger, *Australians and Egypt 1914-19* (1980) p.80 (also ch 8).
[123] B.Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (1974) p.144.
[124] *Australian Official History*, pp.724-727 and *NZOH.*, p.255.
[125] Ryrie papers, MS986/485-643, letter to wife, 1 Oct.1918.
[126] Note by Gullett in Gullett papers, AWM40/68, 'Light Horse'.
[127] See AWM2[10/8] WD 3ALH Regt, roll 158, 11 Dec.1918 & Bean papers, AWM38/3DRL/7953/item8. Trooper Birkbeck (Mitchell Library Sydney ML MSS810, diary 10 Dec.1918) says 36 killed.

The usual policy towards the local populace was shown by British actions towards the peoples of the Sinai who were encountered as the E.E.F. advanced across the peninsula from 1916. The Bedouin of the Sinai were in the unfortunate position of being either suspects, prisoners of war, or civilians who had committed a hostile act.[128] All Bedouin were to be taken in when encountered, and, 'Anzacs resented the job when yarding up the Bedouins on Sinai of hustling the women and children'.[129] The classification of the Bedouin in the Sinai into three hostile groups, which faced the Sinai Arabs with a stark Hobson's choice, was repeated in a report by G.H.Q. with any Bedouin who committed a hostile act to be regarded as a civilian which meant that they were liable to be shot.[130] In the officers' mess Maj.-Gen. A.W. Money, an administrative officer with the E.E.F., was told how 150 Arab villagers in the Sinai had been killed for firing on a rearguard.[131]

The reasons for this harshness are not hard to find. The inhabitants of the Sinai were politically unimportant. They lived in a wedge of land under effective Egyptian control from 1906, and thus Britain did not have to inconvenience herself trying to be agreeable to them. Britain was not attempting to create in them an ally to be used for the benefit of the British empire. The Zionist Commission was trying to promote the position of the Jews of Palestine, and Brugger feels this conciliatory attitude extended to the Arabs of Palestine: 'Britain had plans of extending its control over Palestine after the war, and with a view to making this easier when the time came, was eager to conciliate the local population'.[132] The sympathetic hearing Feisal got stood in contrast to the unsympathetic one given to Egyptian attempts at self-rule, and the 1919 Egyptian revolt was severely repressed. Accounts in the Foreign Office files of dismissive and contemptuous British courts as they found against Egyptian peasants attempting to redress wrongs done by British troops in 1919 sit uneasily with the idea of a benign Britain promoting Arab self-determination.[133]

The soldiers of the E.E.F. were consistent and hated *all* Arabs, and did so from uncomplicated prejudice. The *realpolitik* whereby the British wanted to use certain Arabs sat uneasily with the chauvinism of the soldiers of the E.E.F. The wider political dimensions to the campaign were not lost on the men of the E.E.F., as Lt. J.R. Love of the Camel Brigade, marching up to Amman on the first Trans-Jordan raid, noted:-

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[128]WO154/164 & 167, Provost Marshal reports, Aust/NZ & Aust Divs.
[129]Gullett papers, AWM40/68, 'Light Horse'.
[130]AWM4[1/10], Political Int, GHQ EEF, 'POW' report, 16 June 1917.
[131]Money papers, microfilm 8106-61-2, letter to wife, 14 & 22 Jan.1917. The village was 30 miles from the lines so it must have been located in the Sinai.
[132]Brugger, *Australians and Egypt*, p.81.
[133]FO371/3715-20, and especially court transcripts in F0371/3722.

> At the edge of the plain [up to Amman] we met the first genuine Bedouin Arabs of the story books...After the fighting between us and the combined Turks and Germans, they crept through the bushes looking for loot. Where they found a fallen man they stripped and left him naked. For political reasons we had stringent orders to be carefully friendly to the Arab tribes, many of whom are being won to our side, against the Turk with the Sherif of Mecca.[134]

The 3rd Australian Light Horse Brigade was instructed before the second raid, 'to prevent more damage to property than is necessary for the purpose of the operation'.[135] Lt.-Col. A.C. Temperley of the 60th Division instructed the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division on 26 March 1918 that, 'In case of very serious difficulty with supply you are authorised to requisition supplies at NAAUR and AIN ES SIR but quantities must be checked and full payment will be made subsequently. This must be explained to Sheikhs.'[136] The concern over the feelings of the local sheikhs was commendable, if more than a little incongruous. Events compounded the irony of the instructions to the Anzacs: inhabitants of Ain es Sir fired into the backs of the New Zealanders as they retreated from Amman, and men of the Wellington Regiment taking little heed of Temperley's warning, returned to the village and killed thirty-six inhabitants ('This treacherous attack was dealt with'[137]). The Moslems of Es Salt who 'had watched with sullen disapproval the happy demonstrations of the Christians' of Es Salt during the first raid were more indicative of the reality of support for Feisal than the hopes of the Arab Bureau.[138]

The brigade order for the 1st Australian Light Horse Brigade on 18 March was explicit on the need to treat local inhabitants in a way the men were unaccustomed to: 'As the general good will and assistance of the inhabitants East of Jordan is of the first importance all ranks must be warned to treat them with the greatest consideration, all payments are to be made in cash and all friction is to be strictly avoided. It must be remembered that these natives are of a very different class to those hitherto met with.'[139] This order was repeated the following day to all the men of the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division, and to the men of the New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade who fired back at Ain es Sir.[140]

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[134]Love papers, AWM2DRL/No.521(A), letter home, 2 Apr.1918.
[135]WO95/4559, EEF 3ALH Brig HQ, Instructions (A/938), 11 Apr 1918.
[136]WO95/4660, 60th Div GS Mar.1918, appendix viii, 26 Mar.1918.
[137]*New Zealand Official History*, p.213.
[138]*Australian Official History*, p.582.
[139]AWM4[10/1], 1 ALH Brig, order 68 by Brig Gen Cox, 18 Mar.1918.
[140]WO95/4522, Anzac Div GS, Mar.1918, order 119, 19 Mar.1918 & WO95/4544, NZMRB HQ, Mar.1918, appendices, order 40, 18 Mar.1918.

The local inhabitants were to be encouraged to look to Feisal as their new ruler. The headquarters of the E.E.F. instructed the political officers of the Desert Mounted Corps that in dealing with the people of the Trans-Jordan they, 'should emphasise the importance of the Sherif's Operations and that it is to him rather than to us that the inhabitants should look for guidance in their actions. The intention of our operation is to assist the Sherif until such time as he has made himself master of the area'.[141]

The above instructions were certainly not standard practice when dealing with local inhabitants. Once military needs had launched the Trans-Jordan raids, the political and imperial benefits of using Feisal could be developed, as the political officer Gilbert Clayton pointed out to Mark Sykes: 'Had it been possible to carry out the programme as originally conceived, we should I think have gone a long way towards achieving big things in this [Trans-Jordan] area, but the great offensive in the West...has given us a temporary check...we regard the country east of the Jordan as his [Feisal's] sphere'.[142] Bruce Westrate's study of the Arab Bureau shows the importance of this group of select officers to wider British aims, also how the, 'charge that the Arab Bureau was staffed by dilettantes imprudently swept up in the Arab Revolt, while historically attractive, is inaccurate'.[143] (As Hogarth, the head of the Arab Bureau, wrote to his wife: 'we, who run the Arab part of the show'.[144]) As for Allenby, he seems to have been aware of the politics of the campaign inasmuch as he was glad to have the Arabs on his side, but he delegated the political development of Feisal to the Arab Bureau.

Tactics and grand strategy should ideally have been in a symbiotic relationship, as Wingate, the High Commissioner, wrote to Lord Hardinge: 'I shall be glad when the town of Salt is captured and the Hedjas Railway seriously broken in the direction of Amman. Once that is accomplished and the Arab forces under Feisal, now on the East of the Dead Sea, can get in touch with Allenby's right flank we may expect interesting developments in the Syrian hinterland.'[145] The Arabs, in April 1918, left leaflets at Medina saying that the British were in occupation of Amman. To print and deliver these leaflets showed a degree of foresight by the Arabs and British.[146] Arab documents at St. Antony's College also show how Feisal hoped to spread his revolt north into the Jebel Druze early

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[141]WO95/4472, DMC GS, Apr.1918, appendices, 'Instructions to Political Intelligence Officers with DMC' from GHQ EEF, 25 Apr.1918.
[142]Clayton papers, 693/13/47-52, letter Clayton to Sykes, 4 Apr.1918.
[143]Westrate, *The Arab Bureau: British Policy in the Middle East* (1993) p.135.
[144]Hogarth papers, letters, file 3 1918, 4 May 1918.
[145]Lloyd George papers, F/49/13/1, Wingate to Hardinge, 7 Mar.1918.
[146]S.Tanvir Wasti, 'The Defence of Medina 1916-19', *Middle Eastern Studies*, October 1991, p.646.

in 1918.[147] The possibilities of such a development were not lost on the French, as Colonel Brémond noted: 'a revolt of the Druses and Northern tribes, would create difficulties for the French in Syria'.[148] Foreign Office files indicate that from July 1917 Britain had been attempting to develop a revolt of northern tribes, with Wingate optimistically talking about the 'forthcoming revolt in [the] Syrian Hinterland'.[149]

That the British did not occupy Amman lowered the Arabs' estimation of the E.E.F. and kept wavering tribes out of the war. This was not surprising considering the indifference shown by many Arabs of the Trans-Jordan towards Feisal:-

> By September 1918 when hostilities in Transjordan ceased, the northern tribes had played a relatively minor role in the revolt. The Ruwalla, the most powerful of the northern bedouin, only extended passive support...The Beni Sakhr appeared to have hedged...Christians were the most consistent supporters of the revolt.[150]

Allenby was unable to launch another offensive on the coast until September 1918, and so the Trans-Jordan raids make little sense considering that the northern tribes were unlikely to endanger themselves by allying to Feisal while the Ottoman Fourth Army was garrisoned on the region. The defeats suffered by the British in the spring of 1918 meant that tactics and political strategy were not in a symbiotic relationship; the reality was that the two were disjointed, with the hopefulness of being able to spread the Revolt not being matched by military success or support from local Arab tribes for Feisal.

General Allenby seems to have promised Feisal, in a written note sent through Lawrence, that 'we would stay permanently in Salt'.[151] This would have helped spread the Arab Revolt north into Syria, as William Yale, America's special envoy, noted in one of his regular reports back to the State Department on 29 April 1918:-

> Certain Moslem Syrians have recently received letters from Emir Feisal informing them that he has received word from northern Syria and Mount Lebanon, from important and responsible sheikhs and leaders there that the entire population were prepared to ride against the Ottoman Government, when the time arrived; that is to say when the Emir and the

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[147]Feisal hanging file: documents from the Syrian archives, supplements 2 & 9.
[148]FO141/671/4417, 'France & Hijaz 1917-26', report to Wingate [?], 10 Feb 1917.
[149]FO141/668/4332, 'Hijaz military operations 1917-19', Wingate to Chief London, 13 & 20 July 1917. Quote from *ibid.*, Wingate to Cox Baghdad, 24 July 1917.
[150]Tariq Tell, unpublished chapter 'Between Ottomans & Arabists' sent to author, pp.5-6.
[151]Young papers (at Oxford), file 2, note by Young, 21 Apr.1918.

British were prepared to advance to the north and support an uprising.[152]

William Yale was right to focus on the politics of British operations, and his comments from earlier in April show the difficulties of explaining all that was going on: 'It is difficult if not impossible to fathom all that lies beneath the surface of the present political situation. The ambitions of the King of the Hedjaz and of Feisal are native to them; but how far these ambitions are nursed...by the British...with an eye to restricting French ambitions in Syria can only be surmised.' In the same report Yale told the State Department that the British would, 'welcome any event, which would make it impossible for the French to occupy more than the Syrian littoral'.[153] All things considered the British were shrewd in using Feisal, but the reliance on military success made the political plans reactive as they were to follow in the wake of the British army.

For the Trans-Jordan raids the troops' behaviour towards Arabs had to be modified. This was an uphill struggle considering the average rankers' hostile attitude toward Arabs.[154] This is a good sign of the political dimension to the campaign, as the E.E.F. moved into an area in which there was a potentially useful ally who could further Britain's political and imperial position. While military factors drove the planning of the raids, once launched, the raids were to establish the N.A.A. in Amman. This would provide two things: immediate military benefits for Allenby, and more long-term political advantages for Britain. The raids were a conclusive failure, and thus strategy could not be developed due to tactical shortcomings.

One major shortcoming was Allenby's failure to allot adequate forces for the raids, especially the second attack at the end of April. John Shea was the commander for the first raid, and Chauvel for the second, and whether they, or Allenby as supreme commander, were at fault is not apparent. Chauvel's Brigadier General-General Staff, Howard-Vyse, was 'in Allenby's opinion outstanding', and this indicates that at the second raid the fault was with Allenby's staff.[155] But this should be measured against the poor intelligence and planning at both raids and which were Shea's and Chauvel's responsibilities.

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[152]Yale papers, box 2, report 25, 29 Apr.1918, p.6.
[153]*Ibid.*, report 21, 1 Apr.1918, pp.4-5.
[154]Correspondence of the era described the Italians as 'ice-creamers' & 'macaronis'; Lloyd George called France's colonial troops in Palestine 'niggers' (Curzon papers, MssEur F112/274, EC, 9 Dec.1918, p.14), Frenchmen were 1/3 female (from Barrow, *Fire of Life*, p.117).
[155]Personal correspondence, Alec Hill to author, 24 Oct.1994.

After the Trans-Jordan raids the E.E.F. entered a period of quiescence until September 1918 when, reorganised and facing an enemy weakened and disheartened by the Central powers' defeat in other war-theatres, the E.E.F. was able quickly to defeat the Turks in Palestine and Trans-Jordan, and promote Prince Feisal as an ally by handing Damascus to him.

This chapter has outlined the motivation behind the two Trans-Jordan raids. It has shown the tactical flaws during the two Trans-Jordan raids which resulted in the attempt to occupy Amman being thwarted. The raids were part of Allenby's plans and indicate the importance of measuring up the aspirations of a forceful general in the field with the concerns of the politicians and strategists working from the centre in London.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE BATTLE OF MEGIDDO & THE FALL OF DAMASCUS, 19 SEPTEMBER-31 OCTOBER 1918.

> 'There is a tradition', wrote one embittered French colonialist in 1900, 'that France gets colonies so that England may take them over.' (C.M. Andrew & A.S. Kanya-Forstner, *France Overseas: The Great War and the Climax of French Imperial Expansion* (1981) p.9.)

This chapter includes three headed sections making up the main part of the analysis of the events surrounding Damascus's fall on 1 October 1918. General Allenby's orders following the battle of Megiddo as his cavalry pushed on to Damascus will be examined under 'The advance on Damascus', and in this section some introductory comment will be made on the imperial and political aspect to the Palestine campaign regarding the post-war settlement.[1] This analysis will show that Allenby did not expect Syria to be occupied promptly, and is a conclusion to the argument in previous chapters that Allenby, for various reasons, was methodical in his planning of operations.[2]

The substance of this chapter will examine two inter-related issues: the E.E.F.s purposeful avoidance of Damascus, and the Emir Feisal's coming to power in Damascus. The section entitled 'The capture of Damascus' will examine the question of who entered Damascus first. The conclusion of this analysis is that Feisal entered Damascus in the E.E.F.s wake, and did so because Allenby's cavalry could not by-pass the city and by doing so make it seem as though the Arabs entered first. That Feisal was to be allowed to enter Damascus before the British was for a definite political purpose. The requirement that E.E.F. troops avoid Damascus resulted in needless suffering for Turkish wounded in the hospitals of Damascus, and their predicament will introduce the final portion of study: 'The establishment of Feisal in Damascus'. How and why Feisal was set up in Damascus will be examined under this heading.

Analysis of the orders to the E.E.F. to avoid Syria's capital is essential to demonstrate how Allenby's campaign could be tailored for a particular end. The mechanism whereby the E.E.F. was told to avoid Damascus shows the possible Clausewitzian dimension to military operations.[3] The argument in this thesis is

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[1] Allenby's cavalry corps of four divisions had two *cavalry* and two *mounted* divisions. The Anzac Mtd Div under Maj Gen E.W.Chaytor captured Amman on 25 Sept 1918. The other three divisions (Australian, 4th & 5th) were under Chauvel and drove on Damascus.

[2] The exception to this are the Trans-Jordan raids when Allenby seems not to have exercised his usual grip on operations. That Allenby was methodical is not to impugn him: see how successfully the Romans employed such methods in E.Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* (1978) pp.2-3.

[3] Clausewitz's famous dictum: 'war is merely the continuation of politics by other means' is critically explored in C.Bassford, 'John Keegan and the Grand Tradition of Trashing Clausewitz: a Polemic', *War in History*, November 1994, pp.325-26.

that the Palestine campaign was invariably purposeful. Earlier in the war Lloyd George attempted to use Allenby's operations to help win the war; by late-1918, with the war won in France, the object of the Palestine campaign was to assist in securing Britain's imperial future.

The final section of this chapter argues that British officers helped Feisal establish himself in Damascus, and assisted in removing opposition from the rival Kadir family.[4] The brothers Emir Mohammed Said Abd-el-Kadir and Emir Abd-el-Kadir of the Kadir family were grandsons of the Algerian rebel Abd-el-Kadir, exiled to Syria by France in the nineteenth century. These two brothers challenged Feisal for the administration of Damascus. Feisal's eventual triumph over the Kadirs was a consequence of the military success of the E.E.F., and G.H.Q.s policy of ordering its advancing force to avoid Damascus. For this reason the politics surrounding Damascus's fall will follow on from the study of the E.E.F.s operations from 19 September to 1 October 1918. The events surrounding Feisal's establishment in Damascus and why Feisal's presence could be beneficial for Britain introduces the political discussions in London and Paris from September 1918 on the Middle East, and these deliberations are analysed from Chapter Six.

The *dramatis personæ* involved at the fall of Damascus were Allenby, Harry Chauvel, Feisal, Gilbert Clayton and T.E. Lawrence. Allenby's papers are not very fruitful for clarifying his role in the fall of Damascus, and in particular how much he knew about the British policy of helping set Feisal up as the ruler of Syria. Allenby's part in installing Feisal has therefore to be made out from the other evidence available. Chauvel was the commander of the cavalry that advanced to capture Damascus. Chauvel's task was to carry out his orders from Allenby so as to defeat the Turks, and the matter of establishing Feisal was the responsibility of the British liaison officers attached to the Northern Arab Army. Feisal has left no papers, and there is a general lack of useful translated Arab accounts which makes one rely on what secondary sources are available to examine the Arab position.[5] Clayton, as Allenby's political officer, and Lawrence, as the chief liaison officer with Feisal, were British officers ordered to assist Feisal. It is the view here that Lawrence was the principal British officer attached to Feisal's army, but Lawrence was one of a group of officers serving with the Arabs, and he was carrying out such orders as he had. The provenance of Lawrence's orders regarding the fall of Damascus was Cairo and London, and this chapter will demonstrate that Lawrence's part in Feisal's investiture was fairly straight forward. Lawrence is perhaps the best remembered British official

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[4]*The Times*, 4 Sept.1919, 'Sidelights on the Arab War' has a synopsis of the Kadir brothers.
[5]There is also little primary evidence in Arabic or Ottoman Turkish in archival repositories in the contemporary Middle East.

at Damascus's fall,[6] and as more has been written about him than other officers with the Arabs such as W.F. Stirling, Kinahan Cornwallis, Hubert Young, Pierce Joyce or A.S. Kirkbride he tends to be the focus for analysis of the role of the British officers attached to the Arab army.[7] In a B.B.C. talk in 1941 Colonel Pierce Joyce remembered that Lawrence 'dictated his plan of action' to the Hashemites, and that his plan 'was usually adopted'.[8] Joyce's reminiscence rather gives the impression that Lawrence acted through personal motivation; in fact, Lawrence was carrying out his orders, and the explanation for Lawrence's actions is to be found in the benefits that would accrue to Britain from having Feisal in power in Syria.

The advance on Damascus (see map 3)

Why should Feisal's presence in Syria assist Britain in her negotiations at any post-war peace talks? Altering the Sykes-Picot treaty was to become a central tenet of British policy, and Feisal had a part to play in this as his position as an established ally of Britain helped her exclude France from Syria. In the final analysis it is not apparent that the effort expended by Britain assisting Feisal was commensurate to possible gain, and this will be examined later in the thesis. However, in the uncertain situation prevailing as the war drew to a close, Feisal and the Arab Revolt looked like giving Britain added negotiating strength.

At first, with the worry that France might obtain a mandate in Armenia, the aim was to keep France out of Syria altogether. Once it was realised that this was impracticable, the aim was to secure important modifications vital for the security of the British empire. The most significant alterations were with the oil deposits around Mosul, promised to France by the Sykes-Picot agreement, and to Syria's eastern and southern border.[9] The interest in oil resulted from an awareness of the strategic significance of this new energy source which had been used extensively in the First World War. Oil and empire were seen to be intimately connected. André Tardieu — 'the most brilliant of Clemenceau's

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[6] In the War Cabinet minutes, 1917-18, T.E. Lawrence is mentioned at a number of the meetings. As only a captain he is mentioned in CAB23/3/184(5) & CAB23/4/239(4).

[7] There are biographical details of the officers in the Arab Bureau in R.Bidwell (ed), *The Arab Bulletin: bulletin of the Arab Bureau in Cairo, 1916-19* (1984), vol.i, pp.xxv-xxviii. Hogarth has an amusing ditty about the Arab Bureau in Hogarth papers, file 2, 1917, letter Hogarth to Laura (his wife), 29 Nov.1917.

[8] BBC Talk with Col Joyce, 14 July 1941 (78 rpm record, Broadcasting House, London.).

[9] André Tardieu discusses the oil question in 'Mossoul et le Pétrole', *L'Illustration*, 19 Juin 1920, p.380. The oil concession at Mosul was the preserve of the pre-war *Turkish Petroleum Company*, and the French wanted to obtain a share in the company

advisers' — aptly quoted Curzon's remark in November 1918 that the Entente had gone to victory, 'sur une vague de pétrole'.[10]

Britain obtained Mosul in a secret deal in December 1918, worked out when Clemenceau visited Britain. The importance of this *modus vivendi* between Britain and France is shown by Clemenceau's anger at what he felt was Lloyd George's reneging on their December accord in the spring of 1919.[11] Britain was slow to implement the December 1918 arrangement as once Mosul had been secured for Britain it was hoped that Feisal's presence would force French agreement to further adjustments concerning the Syrian border to secure a pipeline and railway from Mosul to the Mediterranean that would avoid French territory.[12] These added concessions France had not agreed to in December 1918, and was unwilling to concede; indeed, when two pipelines were built from Kirkuk to the Mediterranean in the 1930s, one did pass through Syria.[13] By late-1919 Lloyd George had secured all that he could from France over the Syrian settlement, and so he withdrew Allenby's troops in Syria in November 1919, and left Feisal to negotiate with the French. Demands within Britain to demobilise made withdrawal more urgent, and the cost of armies of occupation, post-war retrenchment, and soldiers' anxiety to return home, served to hasten the Syrian withdrawal.

The border adjustments to Syria's southern and eastern borders which Britain desired were given added impetus by the perceived need to provide for imperial communications across Arabia to India and beyond. The development of air transport made it essential to secure a route for aeroplanes going to Britain's colonial possessions east of Suez.[14] Traditional diplomatic skills at the important negotiations in the spring and autumn of 1919, coupled with the recall to London of Allenby and use of his considerable presence, could obtain what Britain wanted: but a friendly Arab régime in Syria, dependent on British support, could help secure these imperial aims. The question was how to form this government in an area that Britain from 1912 had said that she had no interest in having as a

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[10] C.M.Andrew and A.S Kanya-Forstner, *France Overseas: The Great War and the Climax of French Imperial Expansion* (1981) p.165; Tardieu, 'Mossoul et le Pétrole', *L'Illustration*, 19 Juin 1920, p.380.

[11] For December deal see Chapter Six. The first published mention of it would seem to be Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties* (1938) vol.ii, pp 1037-8.

[12] In his diary for May 1919, Wilson as CIGS, recorded how Clemenceau's unwillingness to accept border modifications to Syria meant Lloyd George postponed the French occupation of Syria (in Callwell, *Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries* (1927) vol.ii, p.194). (See also Hankey papers, 1/5 diary, 21 May 1919.)

[13] For the building of the pipelines see S.H.Longrigg, *Oil and the Middle East: Its Discovery and Development* (1961) pp.86-89 & J.H.Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company* (1994) vol.ii, pp.164-65.

[14] H.Montgomery Hyde, *British Air Policy between the Wars 1918-39* (1976) p.95.

colony. These wider strategic considerations form the background to the capture of Damascus by the E.E.F. at the war's end.

Before examining the capture of Damascus it will now be shown that Allenby ordered the advance on Damascus from 25 September 1918. Considering that the battle of Megiddo began on 19 September, it was only when Allenby was convinced of his victory that he ordered the advance into Syria. Allenby fulfilled his military imperatives, and having decided that an advance into Syria was then possible, he accommodated the political requirement to assist Feisal.

General Allenby's orders from 19 September 1918, when the battle of Megiddo started, to 25 September when he ordered his cavalry on to Damascus, show that the complete collapse of the two Turkish armies west of the Jordan was so rapid and unexpected that the E.E.F. was taken by surprise. Archibald Wavell, XX Corps' Brigadier General-General Staff, when writing his biography of Allenby after the war, wrote to Cyril Falls that Allenby had told his corps' commanders before Megiddo that Damascus was the objective.[15] The evidence does not bear out Wavell's claim.

Maj.-Gen. L.J. Bols, Allenby's Chief of General Staff, sent Chauvel his orders on 9 September. The three cavalry divisions in Chauvel's Desert Mounted Corps were the units that would go on to capture Damascus. The order Bols sent was unambiguous, and was for the cavalry to advance on Afule and Beisan which were vital rail and road junctions behind the Turkish lines and whose capture would isolate the Turkish forces in Palestine.[16] To get into the Plain of Esdraleon, where these two junctions were situated, the cavalry were to transit the Musmus Pass, pass the ancient mound of Megiddo, and once at Afule isolate the Turkish Seventh and Eighth Armies. The war diary of the Desert Mounted Corps recorded how the task of the corps was, 'to advance to EL AFULEH-BEISAN, cut the enemy's railway communication at their most vital point, and get into a position to strike the enemy's columns if they endeavour to escape in a Northerly or North-easterly direction'.[17] The plan worked perfectly, and Liddell Hart's chapter title for the battle of Megiddo: 'The Annihilation of the Turkish Armies', well describes the victory achieved.[18] While Liman von Sanders subsequently disputed the figures on the number of prisoners taken by the E.E.F., there is no doubt that his armies quickly dissolved. Von Sanders himself only narrowly escaped capture at his headquarters at Nazareth, as the speed of the E.E.F.s advance was so rapid and the collapse of his armies so complete.[19]

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[15]Allenby papers, 6/IX-X/22, Wavell to Falls, 8 May 1939.
[16]WO95/4371, GHQ, WD GS 1-18/9/18, Bols to GOC DMC, 9 Sept 1918.
[17]WO95/4473, DMC GS, Sept.1918 appendices, order 21, 12 Sept.1918.
[18]Liddell Hart, *History of the First World War* (Pan 1972) p.432.
[19]For von Sanders' argument see *RUSI Journal*, 1921, 'Notes on some foreign military publications', p.182 (and 1920 edition p.358).

Writing to his wife, Allenby said that he was, 'almost aghast at the extent of the victory'.[20]

General Allenby did not initially think that an advance deep into Syria was possible. On 23 September the War Office enquired of Allenby whether, 'in view of the completeness of your success the possibility of a cavalry raid on Aleppo'.[21] Two days later Allenby replied to the missive saying that the raid was not possible, and that he was, 'convinced that unless War Cabinet is prepared to undertake on a large scale a combined naval and military operation at Alexandretta...the only sound policy is to advance in stages as in the past'.[22] This rather diminishes the idea of Megiddo as a brilliantly conceived cavalry finale to Allenby's campaign as the success of the final battle was an unexpected surprise, and the cavalry advance seems to have been organised *ad hoc* only when the Turks' plight became manifest. Against this must be set the fact that the improvisation of this final cavalcade was impressive considering the abrupt collapse of the Turks. The complete victory of Allenby was the fruit of effective planning and hard training, and the scale and speed of Allenby's final victory were, perhaps, unique in the First World War.

The *Australian Official History* records how Allenby visited Chauvel on 22 September and as Megiddo's success 'had far exceeded their hopes', Allenby asked, 'What about Damascus', to which Chauvel replied 'Rather'.[23] The impression is of a growing recognition that something spectacular was possible, but Allenby and Chauvel were careful not to be complacent. By 25 September Allenby realised that the Turkish retreat was now a rout and as part of his staged advance Allenby proposed an, 'advance to the line DAMASCUS-BEIRUT [as] the first of these stages, and this I hope to begin within a few days'.[24] Thus Chauvel remembered that when he received his final instructions for the capture of Damascus at Jenin, on 26 September, 'the Commander-in-Chief told me that, when I had taken DAMASCUS, I was to instruct the Wali [Turkish Governor] to carry on the civil administration of the city'.[25]

That Allenby was developing his pursuit in reaction to his unfolding battlefield success is supported by the commander of the 4th Division, Maj.-Gen. G. de S. Barrow, in his account of the campaign in *The Fire of Life*: 'On 25th September I received instructions to march at once to Deraa, join hands there

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[20]Allenby papers, 1/9/6, letter to wife, 24 Sept.1918.
[21]WO33/960, WO to GOC Egypt [66977], 32 Sept.1918, p.111.
[22]Milner papers, III/B/140, GOC Egypt to WO, 25 Sept.1918 (copy in WO33/960, p.114 & WO95/4371, folder 1-15/10/18).
[23]*AOH*, p.728.
[24]WO95/4371, 1-15/10/18, Chief Egypt to Troopers, 25 Sept.1918.
[25]AWM45[7/38], 'Heyes papers', report by Chauvel, 2 Oct.1918. (In Allenby papers, 2/5/16, p.5 Chauvel says the Jenin meeting was on the 25th.).

with the Hedjaz force and then proceed to Damascus'.[26] Bols instructed Chauvel on 26 September to advance to the line Damascus-Beirut.[27] The orders recorded in the war diaries of the three mounted divisions that were to advance on Damascus indicate that the move forward was being ordered from 25 September.[28] Having decided to move on Damascus the operations of the E.E.F. were complicated by the need to avoid the city so as to allow a Hashemite administration to be installed. Ultimately, operational requirements necessitated that the cavalry pass through Damascus, but the following analysis shows that this only happened as it proved impossible to pass round the city.

The capture of Damascus

This section will correct the idea that it was the Arabs who liberated Damascus, a point of view which has become rather established, as is shown by Zeine N. Zeine's comment in 1960: 'On 30th September 1918 four hundred years of Turkish rule came to an end...At dawn the next day, Arab troops of the Emir Feisal's army...occupied Damascus.'[29] That the Arabs entered Damascus first is repeated in Longman's *Chronicle of the World*, a book aimed at a mass readership.[30] In fact, analysis of the relevant primary documents shows that it is false to insist that the Arabs did take Damascus, and this chapter will continue Elie Kedourie's cogent argument that Feisal was permitted into the city for definite political ends.[31] The controversy over who entered Damascus started almost as soon as Lt.-Col. A.C.N. Olden, commanding the 10th Australian Light Horse Regiment, moved through Damascus, and accepted the city's surrender from Emir Said of the Kadir family early in the morning of 1 October 1918.[32] The actual battle of Megiddo is ignored in this analysis as the Turkish Fourth, Seventh

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[26] *Fire of Life*, p.208.

[27] WO95/4371, 19-30/9/18, CGS to GOC DMC [Z/96/20], 26 Sept.1918.

[28] WO95/4473, Sept., wireless message GA50, 25 Sept.1918 & WO95/4514, 4 Cav Div, 12 Brigade, July 1918-, WD 25 Sept.1918 12.00hrs.

[29] Zeine N.Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence: Western Diplomacy and the Rise and Fall of Faisal's Kingdom in Syria* (1960) p.25. A.L.Tibawi makes the same claim in *A Modern History of Syria including Lebanon and Palestine* (1969) pp.268-69.

[30] *Chronicle*, (1989) p.1069.

[31] Kedourie, *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire 1914-21* (1987 reprint of 1956 original) ch.5; 'The Capture of Damascus', *Middle Eastern Studies*, no 1, October 1964 (reprinted in Kedourie, *The Chatham House Version*).

[32] Olden recorded the events of that morning when Emir Said, as Governor, offered Damascus's surrender to Olden in *Westralian Cavalry in the War: The Story of the Tenth Light Horse Regiment AIF in the Great War 1914-18* (1921) pp.278-79. Olden's brigade GOC (Br Gen Wilson) has left a detailed and informative account of the events of 1 October in Bean papers, AWM38/3DRL/7953/ item31, 'Memo on entry of Allied Army', by Wilson 19 Feb.1929 (another copy in AWM252/A220). In WO95/4473 (dated 25 Oct.1918) Wilson has left another account of the activities of the 3rd ALH.

and Eighth Armies collapsed on 19 September 1918, and their withdrawal quickly turned into a *sauve qui peut.*

This section of analysis builds on Elie Kedourie's studies of British policy in the Middle East in *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire 1914-21* (1987 reprint, chapter 5) and 'The Capture of Damascus, 1 October 1918' in *The Chatham House Version and other Middle-Eastern Studies* (1984 reprint). The continuity of this thesis means a chapter on the fall of Damascus is essential and there is new evidence in this chapter, notably from the Australian archives. Alec Hill's biography of Harry Chauvel, *Chauvel of the Light Horse* (1978, chapter 11), also adds to the corpus that says that the Arabs were given Damascus, and the role of those such as the Australians sometimes forgotten. This author has also published an account of the Australian involvement in Damascus's fall in the April 1995 issue of the *Journal of the Australian War Memorial* using evidence contained in this chapter.[33]

The commander of the 3rd Australian Light Horse Brigade, Brig.-Gen. L.C. Wilson (Olden's superior), reported that up to the time that his brigade, 'completed its passage through the City...thereby closing the only remaining available exit for the enemy, no member of the SHERIFF'S Army was visible in any part of the city within view of this Brigade'.[34] The implication of Wilson's comment that no regular Arab forces were within Damascus before his Australians will be shown to be correct.

Because Feisal's main use was to be political, the events surrounding the fall of Damascus had to be distorted, and history altered to give impression that the Arabs were the first in. The War Office communiqué on the 3 October began this metamorphosis by announcing that at, '6 a.m. on October 1 the city was occupied by a British force and by a portion of the Arab Army of King Hussein'.[35] This had been elevated by 17 October, in a report by Lawrence, into: 'the Arab Camel Corps formed the extreme right of the Allied advance upon Damascus, which was entered on the night of the 30th, Arabs being the first troops in'.[36]

What really happened after the Turkish line was ruptured at the battle of Megiddo was that Allenby's mounted troops attempted to get around Damascus to fulfil the plan to promote the Arabs. The Australian Mounted Division exhausted itself trying to cross the Barada Gorge and then pass the high land to the north of Damascus to interdict the road to Homs. This attempt to pass round Damascus

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[33]University of London regulation 10.14 (1993-94) invites Ph.D. candidates to include published work with the bound thesis, so the aforementioned article is included as appendix 7.
[34]WO95/4473, 'Report on Occupation of Damascus', by Wilson, 25 Oct.1918.
[35]*The Times*, 3 October 1918.
[36]*The Times*, 'The Arab March on Damascus', 17 October 1918. Lawrence as author see Kedourie, review of Gardner's *Allenby* in *Middle Eastern Studies*, July 1965, p.411.

failed largely because the terrain was too difficult. The Marquess of Anglesey's *A History of the British Cavalry* (1994) includes a photograph (46) of the Barada Gorge which shows the narrow and impeding nature of this defile. To add to nature's difficulties the Australian Mounted Division caught a column of retreating Turks in the Barada Gorge, and the devastation wrought turned the gorge into a shambles with war debris further blocking the route to the north of Damascus. Hence, Wilson had to slip elements of his brigade through the city early on the morning of 1 October.[37] Wilson's brigade was followed later in the morning by 'Bourchier's force' of two regiments of the 4th Australian Light Horse Brigade, and also by elements of the 5th Indian Division coming up from Daraya. As the tactical narrative of the Australian Light Horse recounts: 'orders had been received that no troops were to enter DAMASCUS unless absolutely forced to do so', adding how after a, 'thorough reconnaissance the 3rd Bde. found that the hills North of DAMASCUS were impassable for Cavalry and started to push down the Beirut Road towards DAMASCUS'.[38] Once through the city orders were issued on the need to stay out of the city, with a strict pass system enforced to prevent E.E.F. soldiers entering Damascus.[39] Allenby telegraphed the C.I.G.S. on the evening of 1 October at 23.59 hrs. to report that, 'all troops...have been withdrawn from the town'.[40] This instruction from Allenby was not surprising considering that he had been, 'authorised on 1st October [23.10 hrs.] to allow the Arab flag to be hoisted at Damascus'.[41] This order was brought up in a reply by Lord Robert Cecil to a question by Theodore Taylor, a Liberal M.P., in Parliament on 31 October 1918, and can also be found in the War Cabinet minutes for the 2 October where the Director of Military Operations told the meeting that at 06.00 hrs. the previous morning Allenby had been told to hoist the Arab flag.[42]

To help Feisal in an unobtrusive manner as possible a squadron of the Australian Light Horse was ordered, 'to be placed at the disposal of the Sheriffian Authorities'.[43] However, maintenance of law and order was still sacrificed, as the *Australian Official History* pointed out in 1923:-

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[37]The hill just north of Damascus (Djebel Kassioun) was a further obstacle: 'Wilson's scouts could find no mountain track to lead them around the city to the north' (Hill, *Chauvel*, p.178). There are photos of the hill in AWMJ02219A, J02219B & C04311.

[38]AWM25/455/9, Aust Div tactical narrative, n.d., p.5.

[39]WO95/4551, Aust Div GS Oct., appendix 7, 'Discipline in Damascus', 4 Oct.1918.

[40]WO95/4371, 1-15/10/18, GS (Ops) EEF GHQ, Allenby to Troopers, 1 Oct.1918, 23.59 hrs.

[41]*Hansard*, 110 HC Deb 5s, col.1640, 31 Oct.1918 (Sec of State for Foreign Affairs (Cecil) to Theodore Taylor). The order was received by the EEF at 23.10hrs (in WO95/4371, 1-15/10/18, GS (Ops) EEF GHQ, cable from Troopers (CIGS) London in WD 1 Oct.1918, 23.10 hrs.)

[42]Theodore Taylor's entry in *Who's Who of British MPs* and his obituary in *The Times* (21 Oct.1952) do not indicate why he asked this pertinent question; WC 481 (2), 2 Oct.1918 in Curzon papers, MssEur F112/145.

[43]WO95/4551, Aust Div GS Oct., WD 2 Oct.1918 12.20 hrs.

> The situation at Damascus was one unparalleled in warfare. True to its compact [with Feisal], and ignoring the dismay and the protests of the capable Christians, the British Government, through the Commander-in-Chief, handed over the administration of the great city to the Arabs immediately on its capture. It is true that many of the Arab civil servants employed by the Turks remained in their offices, and of these some were efficient men. But the strong guiding hand in the affairs of the city had been the Turk's, and during the war the organising genius of the Germans had been the decisive factor.[44]

Alec Kirkbride, a British officer with the Arab army, backs up the Australian account in his book *A Crackle of Thorns* observing how the, 'police, however, had ceased to function and there was political objection to calling in the British troops, who were camped on the outskirts of the town, and so admitting that the new Arab administration was incapable of controlling its own people.'[45]

Handing over the city to the Arabs was also contrary to the usual policy of giving civil control of captured cities to the remaining Turkish administration, usually headed by a governor (a *vali*). Feisal's army was not a typical European-style force so the Australians could not distinguish who was a Hashemite regular, and who an irregular after loot: 'it is almost impossible to tell the difference between the Sheriffian forces and irregular bands'.[46]

Major George Wheler, with the 5th Division, commented after the war on the need to stay out of Damascus. His division had marched the length of the city on 1 October, he said, but it should not have happened as, 'orders had arrived from the Desert Corps to say that the first entry of the allied troops into the city of Damascus would take place next day, October 2nd'. This caused some consternation for Maj.-Gen. H.J.M. Macandrew, Wheler's divisional commander, who told Wheler, 'not to mention the previous day's entry'.[47] The Desert Mounted Corps instructed the 4th Division that only 'HEDJAZ regulars are to be allowed to enter DAMASCUS' as part of the plan to hand control to Feisal.[48] The result of these actions was to give the Arabs a task which, 'would have taxed the capacity of a Western Power accustomed to managing the affairs of great cities'.[49]

Kinahan Cornwallis, who became the political officer in Damascus after the war, and who was present at the fall of Damascus, wrote in 1919 how, 'it must be confessed that our policy in the past is calculated to increase our

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[44] *Australian Official History*, pp.767-68.
[45] Kirkbride, *A Crackle of Thorns* (1956) p.9.
[46] WO95/4551, Aust Div GS Oct., WD 2 Oct.1918, 13.15 hrs.
[47] G.Wheler, 'The Capture of Damascus in 1918', *The Cavalry Journal*, July 1935, p.447.
[48] WO95/4473, DMC Oct., appendices, Adv Descorps to Four Cav, 1 Oct.1918.
[49] *Australian Official History*, p.768.

difficulties in the future. During the war admittedly for opportunistic reasons, we greatly encouraged the Arabs and allowed them to retain a sense of their own importance and efficiency which was scarcely justified by facts.' In the same memorandum Cornwallis added how, 'on our occupation of Syria the same policy was continued. An Arab Administration was installed and left to work out its salvation with practically no control from higher authority.'[50]

General Barrow, the commander of the 4th Division, was distressed by the undisciplined Arab troops near Deraa, 'whereupon Lawrence produced written instructions from Allenby to the effect that Arabs should be allowed to take over local administration wherever they entered through their own exertion...And so to the threshold of Damascus. Allenby in his prudence knew that this day belonged to Feisal.'[51] Allenby's Brigadier General-General Staff, Bartholomew, sent the British officers with Feisal on 25 September the following message: 'Communicate the following message to Sherif Feisal from Commander-in-Chief...There is no objection to Your Highness entering DAMASCUS as soon as you consider that you can do so with safety'.[52] In fact, Feisal's army was unable to take Damascus on its own, so the E.E.F. cavalry ended up having to 'secure all hostile approaches'[53], but, 'avoiding the town if at all possible. Every precaution should be taken to prevent troops entering the town'.[54]

The instruction from the Desert Mounted Corps to Barrow's 4th Division was that Hedjaz, 'regulars are to be allowed to enter DAMASCUS'.[55] The war diary of the 29th Lancers in the 4th Division describes how Damascus was surrounded and that: 'No troops were however allowed in the town during the day'.[56] Once through Damascus the cavalry were carefully bivouacked north and east of the city, and pickets put out to, 'prevent all troops except SHERIFIAN Regulars from entering the city'.[57]

The 'special instruction' to the Australian Mounted Division on 29 September read: 'While operating against the enemy about DAMASCUS care will be taken to avoid entering the town if possible. Unless forced to do so for tactical reasons, no troops are to enter DAMASCUS. Brigadiers will arrange picquet all

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[50]WO106/193, Memo by Cornwallis (Damascus) sent to Curzon via Clayton, memo dated 20 June 1919, sent to Curzon in July 1919.
[51]Birdwood, *Nuri as-Said: A Study in Arab Leadership* (1959) pp.86-87.
[52]WO95/4371, WD GS GHQ EEF 19-30/9/18 [Z/96/027.B], appendices, BGGS for CGS EEF to British Officers with Feisal, 25 Sept.1918 (also in AWM4[1/6], roll753).
[53]WO95/4371, WD GS GHQ EEF 19-30/9/18 , appendices, Adv Descorps to GHQ [GA72], 26 Sept.1918.
[54]*Ibid.*, appendices, Adv Descorps to GHQ [GA99], 28 Sept.1918.
[55]WO95/4473, DMC Oct.1918, appendices, Adv Descorps to Four Cav, 1 Oct.1918 [GA165].
[56]WO95/4514, WD 4 Cav Div, 11 Cav Bde, 29 Lancers, 1 Oct.1918.
[57]WO95/4514, 4 Cav Div HQ 12 Cav Bde WD, 1 Oct.1918, 11.00hrs.

roads from their areas into the town to ensure this order being carried out.'[58] However, as has been shown, tactical difficulties forced the Australians through Damascus as dawn broke on 1 October 1918, and, 'as it was not the policy to enter DAMASCUS if it could be helped' the 3 A.L.H. Brigade 'tried to pass by DUMAR to HOMS road...[but]...it was found that further advance across the mountains was impossible...1 Oct. 0500 [hrs] 3rd A.L.H. Bde. pushed through gorge towards DAMASCUS.'[59] Jean Pichon, with the *Régiment Mixte de Marche de Cavalerie* attached to the Australian Mounted Division, was clear in his account of the campaign that they were ordered to avoid Damascus, and Pichon shows how the source of the order was G.H.Q: 'Peu après [on 30 September as his unit was by the Barada Gorge], un autre officier australien transmet la recommandation suivante du grand état-major [G.H.Q.[60]]: "Quelles que soient les circonstances de la bataille, aucune troupe ne devra pénétrer dans Damas sans ordres formels".' (Pichon added: 'Que se passe-t-il?')[61] The Australians tried to follow their orders but, 'Il paraît que l'interdiction d'entrer dans Damas a fait changer le plan d'attaque de la division australienne'.[62] It was found impossible to pass north of Damascus, and the tired Australians took the obvious route through the city. Pichon repeated his accusation in 1938 saying that Allenby abandoned the fruits of victory and gave it to the Arabs.[63] As a French officer Pichon was naturally suspicious of British motives, but the evidence outlined in this chapter supports his assertions in *Sur la Route Des Indes: Un Siècle Après Bonaparte*. It is worth adding that while Pichon's unit was instructed to avoid Damascus, that the unit received the instructions after 19 September, when the battle started, does show the *ad hoc* nature of the order. This shows that while avoiding Damascus was a clear political priority, the E.E.F. also had operational concerns which competed with non-military objectives.

In his biography of Lawrence, Jeremy Wilson writes that there, 'seemed no reason for the Arab forces to enter Damascus' on the 30 September, adding that the Arabs on 20 September, 'had been ordered not to go to Damascus... when they were certainly in a position to do so'.[64] This hardly equates with the advance of the Northern Arab Army being a consequence of Barrow's 4th Division advancing from Deraa, with the Arabs being on Barrow's right flank.

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[58]WO95/4551, Aust Mtd Div GS, appendices, Sept 1918, Special Instructions to Accompany GA740 from Maj Chisholm for Lt Col GS Aust Mtd Div to rest of Division, 29 Sept.1918. (See also WO95/4473 DMC Sept.1918, appendices, [GA99] & [GA147].)

[59]WO95/4473, DMC, separate Sept -Oct. file, 'Report on Operations of Aust Mtd Div during period 18 Sept.-4 Oct.1918, p.10.

[60]Translation of *état-major* is 'general staff'. Surely a reference to Allenby's HQ.

[61]Jean Pichon, *Sur la Route Des Indes: Un Siècle Après Bonaparte* (1932) pp.121-22.

[62]*Ibid.*, p.122.

[63]Pichon, *Le Partage du Proche-Orient* (1938) p.152.

[64]Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia*, pp 560, 1106.

The 3,000 regular troops of the Northern Arab Army were unable to fight the retreating Turco-German units without the strength of the E.E.F. This is not a slight on the Arab army whose military role was to distract and harry the Turks. It was not the Arabs' task to engage in set-piece battles with Ottoman regular units. At the Paris Peace Conference it was claimed by Feisal that 100,000 Arabs had taken the field; to which Allenby replied, 'that he had never had so many at one time'.[65] Allenby's reply was something of an understatement, and the exaggeration of Feisal's worth had more to do with manipulating the French. Brig.-Gen. Wilson of the 3rd Australian Light Horse Brigade remembered in 1929 that there were 15,000 Turks and Germans in the city on the night of the 30 September and that these would have kept out any Arab force.[66]

The evidence supports Wilson's 1929 account and makes Lawrence's assertion that with, 'the help of their retainers [the Kadirs] the Arab Flag was on the Town Hall before sunset [on 30 September]' somewhat misleading.[67] The Kadirs were far from being Feisal's 'retainers', and Feisal's Rualla horse did not enter Damascus on the 30 September to wait for the British. Any irregulars slipped in as a result of the E.E.F.s success that forced the Turks to retire, and while the Kadirs did raise the Sherifian flag on the afternoon of the 30th, they had ambitions of their own and also had to wait for the morrow and Olden's Australians.

Brig.-Gen. Wilson pointed out that Lawrence's account in *Revolt in the Desert* (1926), 'by a suppression of a large number of relevant facts creates a very false idea as to what really took place...if there were in fact any Arabs from his [Lawrence's] force [in Damascus], they sneaked in there as civilians, and did not show themselves as enemy in arms.'[68] Before leaving Damascus Jemal Pasha had appointed Emir Said as governor, and Olden leading the 10th Australian Light Horse Regiment (of the 3rd Brigade) was given Damascus's surrender by this grandson of Abd-el-Kadir.[69] The war diary of the 10th Australian Light Horse Regiment describes the elation of all ranks on being the first into Damascus, and how Emir Said had been made governor on the 30 September by Djemal Pasha.[70]

Jeremy Wilson's assertion that Shukri Pasha was the provisional governor of Damascus omits the fact that Emir Said of the Kadir family had been made

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[65]Meeting on 20 March 1919 in Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference* (1939) vol ii, p 690 (copy in Hurewitz (ed) *Diplomacy in ME* also).
[66]Bean papers, AWM38/3DRL/7953/item31, Memo by Wilson, 19 Feb.1929, pp.3-4.
[67]*Ibid.* In *Seven Pillars*, p.665 also.
[68]Wilson's report in Bean papers, AWM38/3DRL/7953/item31, pp.3-4.
[69]A.C.N.Olden, *Westralian Cavalry in the War: The Story of the 10th LH Regiment AIF in the Great War 1914-1918* (1921) p 278.
[70]AWM4[10/15], 10 ALH Regt, roll165, war diaries 30 Sept.-1 Oct.1918.

governor by Djemal Pasha when he left Damascus with the Turks on 30 September.[71] Shukri was an ally of Feisal's and the reason he was being established as governor was political. Said, of the Kadir family, was seen as francophile and his meeting with Olden of the 10th Australian Light Horse Regiment on 1 October when he had given Damascus's surrender as its governor was to be ignored.

Jeremy Wilson's claim that despite, 'Allenby's orders, some of his units had found an excuse to pass through the outskirts of the city' early on the 1 October morning omits that the reason for the Australians passing through the city was their fatigue resulting from the attempt to find a way round the north of Damascus, which being impassable because of terrain and war debris, forced them into Damascus.[72] The Australians' fighting edge was being blunted by non-military concerns. R.M.P. Preston's account of the campaign supports the view that the political instructions following the battle of Megiddo hindered operations: 'For political reasons, strict orders had been given that no troops were to enter Damascus, and these orders considerably hampered our subsequent operations, and made our task more difficult'.[73]

When Chauvel met Lawrence on 1 October Chauvel remembered how neither, 'Lawrence nor his Arab followers could have thought for one moment that they were the first in. The first thing almost that Lawrence said to me when I met him at the Serai, not an hour afterwards, was that the whole city was full of Indian troops which he thought was inadvisable.'[74] Lawrence was an informed political officer and he would have known that the Arabs came into Damascus in the train of the E.E.F.; Lawrence's task was precisely to promote Feisal and his Arab forces as part of *his* duties. Jeremy Wilson is right to point out that it is, 'clear from the retrospective accounts given by both Chauvel and Lawrence that there was considerable tension between the two men. Chauvel knew no more than Barrow about the political status of the Arabs.'[75] The differences between Chauvel and Lawrence will be returned to later in this chapter.

The non-military dimension outlined above was commented on by Henry Gullett who observed in his notes on the campaign how the Australian Mounted Division was ordered to reach Damascus on the 2 October, 'but they travelled so fast...that they arrived by the 1st...There was no reason why Ausdiv should not have reached Damascus at least 24 hours earlier...It seemed as though Chauvel or G.H.Q. was afraid to venture Ausdiv alone into the Damascus area.'[76] However,

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[71]Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia*, p 562.
[72]*Ibid.*, p.563.
[73]R.M.P.Preston, *The Desert Mounted Corps* (1921) p.267.
[74]Gullett papers, AWM40 97, notes by Chauvel on ch.XLIV of *AOH*.
[75]Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia*, p 563.
[76]Gullett papers, AWM40/77, 'Arrival of Ausdiv at Damascus'.

Chauvel's fear was perhaps not simply the shattered remnants of the Turks facing him, but had something to do with waiting for the Northern Arab Army to come up with Barrow's 4th Division. Chauvel seems not to have known fully of the policy for administering Damascus, but his position as head of the mounted corps and orders he issued indicate that he knew political objectives lay behind his operations. When Chauvel had asked Allenby on 25 September: 'What about these Arabs? There is a rumour that they are to have the administration of Syria', Allenby replied, 'Yes, I believe so', and told Chauvel to work through Lawrence[77] until Allenby, 'came to Damascus which would be as soon as possible after its capture'.[78] On 3 October at the Hotel Victoria in Damascus Allenby arranged with Feisal a temporary measure on the administration of Syria, and Knightley and Simpson's comment on Allenby's feelings about the politics of the campaign rings true: 'he hated the intrigue in which political considerations sometimes involved him'.[79]

General Allenby's hope that he could, 'recognise the local Arab Administration which it is anticipated will be already in existence' was never realised.[80] The Arabs had neither an administration, nor were they prompt in arriving, hence the orders to slip through Damascus to give the impression that the Arabs entered first. It is not entirely clear what was Allenby's view on the political aspects to his operations. Cyril Falls, replying to Australian comments in 1930 on the *Official History*, certainly did little to clarify this question:-

> Finally as to General Chauvel's remarks about his instructions from the Commander-in-Chief and his justifiable complaint that Lawrence gave him the slip on the morning of the 1st October, I do not feel that this should be mentioned in the history. We do not know — and if we did know, should not want to publish our knowledge — what was the precise political significance of Lawrence's action, and how far the Commander-in-Chief knew or guessed what he was going to do.[81]

There is evidence from America's special envoy with the E.E.F., William Yale, discussed below, that some Arab Bureau officers acted beyond their orders and misled Allenby. However, the basic policy of assisting Feisal was known by Allenby, and Yale's suspicions will be shown to be misplaced. James Edmonds, in 1929, pointed out to C.E.W. Bean (the Australian official historian) that:-

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[77] Allenby papers, 7/4/1, Chauvel to Director AWM, 1 Jan.1936, p.7 (also in Knightley and Simpson, *The Secret Lives of Lawrence of Arabia* (1971) p.106).

[78] Allenby papers, 2/5/16, Chauvel to Bean, 8 Oct.1929 encl in Chauvel to Allenby, 22 Oct.1929, p.5.

[79] Knightley & Simpson, *Secret Lives of Lawrence*, p.106.

[80] WO157/731, Sept.1918 Int Summaries of GHQ, Pol Int WD 29 Sept.1918.

[81] Bean papers, AWM38/3DRL/7953/item32, Falls to Bean, 27 Jan 1930. Falls added that Allenby and the FO had read the chapters and were 'satisfied'.

> the capture was entirely due to Brig.-General Wilson. It will be emphasised that 500 instead of 10,000 Arabs co-operated. As to the administration of Damascus, nothing is said in the history [the British history] except that Lord Allenby, in accordance with his instructions, allowed an Arab Administration to be set up, and that it was inexperienced. There seems no object in emphasising its incompetence.[82]

General Allenby wrote to his wife on 3 October how Feisal was going to take over the administration of Damascus, and how: 'His flag now flies in Damascus'.[83] On the 26 September the war diary of G.H.Q. noted that Lawrence had been contacted so as to forward a, 'message from Commander-in-Chief to Sherif Feisal regarding recent operations and Sherif Feisal's entry into DAMASCUS', and this order suggests that Allenby knew what was happening.[84] Allenby was in overall charge of *all* aspects of his campaign, but necessarily had to delegate responsibility. In his book on the Arab Bureau Westrate remarks how, 'Allenby's swift recognition of the Arab provisional government on the heels of Damascus's fall certainly suggests that this policy had official sanction', and Westrate adds that the, 'scope of Britain's advantageous position was not lost on policymakers in London'.[85]

Before examining further the politics surrounding the new Arab government in Damascus, some comment will now be made on the effect on Turkish wounded of the order to circumnavigate Damascus. The difficulties that the newly formed Arab administration had in running Damascus impacted adversely on Turkish sick and wounded in military hospitals who were left without proper medical care.

The withdrawal of the Turkish administration resulted in confusion as Feisal's Arabs found it impossible to provide the necessary municipal services to keep a large city functioning.[86] However, the partial evidence available today indicates that Turkish wounded left in Damascus suffered not just because of Arab logistical problems, but also because the political need to exclude the E.E.F. from Damascus left the sick and wounded Turks bereft of care.

Medical units of the E.E.F. were ordered to stay out of Damascus, as is shown by the war diary for the assistant director of medical services of the

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[82] Bean papers, AWM38/3DRL/7953/item31, Edmonds to Bean, 14 May 1929.
[83] Allenby papers, 1/9/12, letter to wife, 3 Oct.1918.
[84] AWM4[1/6], GS GHQ EEF, roll753, WD 26 Sept.1918, 00.30hrs. Allenby when negotiating with the French in March 1919 said: 'Shortly after the capture of Damascus, Feisal had been allowed to occupy and administer the city' (from J.C.Hurewitz (ed), *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East* (1956) p.56).
[85] B.Westrate, *The Arab Bureau: British Policy in the Middle East* (1993) p.169.
[86] The administrative problems are portrayed in D.Lean's 1962 film *Lawrence of Arabia*.

Australian Mounted Division: 'All wheels halted EL MEZZE in compliance with strict orders that no troops should enter DAMASCUS'.[87] The result for the Turkish wounded left behind by their comrades is outlined by the Australian medical team with the Australian Mounted Division in no uncertain terms: 'Condition of 6-700 patients in this hospital [Hamidieh Barracks] was found on inspection to be indiscribably [sic] hideous and inhuman. Deserted by all save a handful of Turkish Medical personnel, starved for three days, and suffocated by the stench of their own offal and the unburied dead, the plight of these wretches was more than miserable.'[88] The American, William Yale, corroborates the Australian account in a letter written in 1968, where he remembered the plight of the Turkish wounded.[89] William Yale's evidence is particularly useful in that he was a senior figure, and by his own account held the E.E.F. in high regard; he thus seems unbiased.[90] In his account Yale pointed out that British policy was, 'to allow the Arab military forces and the local municipal Syrian leaders to assume responsibility for governing the city and maintaining law and order'.[91] An Australian officer showed Yale the hospital and said that he, 'had asked authority to supply their [the Turks'] needs and had sufficient supplies to do so. He said he had been ordered not to do so. He said he would probably be court martialled if I reported his conversation with me.'[92] For Yale the 'ghastly heartrending sight'[93] of the sick and wounded Turks was something he never forgot: 'Nothing I did during the whole world war period do I regret so deeply and with such shame as my failure to use my position wisely and calmly to alleviate the atrocious suffering of these eight hundred men'.[94]

William Yale informed Brig.-Gen. Gilbert Clayton, Allenby's Chief Political Officer, of the conditions in the hospital, and Clayton's response was direct:-

> I told Clayton that something must be done at once to feed and care for those poor devils in the hospital. I said it was ghastly hypocrisy to talk about German atrocities in Belgium while allowing eight hundred Turks,

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[87] WO95/4553, Aust Div Medical Services, WD 1 Oct.1918.
[88] *Ibid.*, WD 3 Oct.1918 (this type of language is unusual for a war diary).
[89] Yale Papers, box 1: file 1, report 'The Turkish Hospital in Damascus', dated 17 Sept.1968 encl. with letter (same date) to publishers of *The Secret Lives of Lawrence of Arabia* (by Knightley & Simpson).
[90] See appendix 5.
[91] Yale Papers, box 1: file 1, report 'The Turkish Hospital in Damascus', dated 17 Sept.1968 encl with letter (same date) to publishers of *The Secret Lives of Lawrence of Arabia* (by Knightley & Simpson).
[92] *Ibid.*
[93] *Ibid.*
[94] Yale papers, box 1: file 9, 'It Takes So Long', Memory of the Turkish Barracks in Damascus 1-5 Oct.1918 written by Yale 11 Feb.1938 & sent to Elizabeth Monroe 1968.

> sick and wounded, to starve to death. Clayton was a cold, hard, self-controlled man upon whom my emotionalism had no effect. Quite indifferently he said to me, 'Yale your [sic] not a military man'.[95]

Yale does say that Clayton had not seen the hospital, but his conclusion points the real finger of blame: 'I am convinced he [Clayton] did nothing because of political reasons, not wishing the English to interfere in the affairs of the Arab administration of Damascus'.[96] This excuse can have provided little succour for the wounded and sick Turks who were left with, 'no food, no nurses, human shit ankle deep'.[97] While Arab irregulars looted the hospitals, Feisal's Arab administration did do its best to establish order, but the Arabs did not have the backup to cope with running the Turkish hospitals. It was to Chauvel's credit that he re-occupied the Turkish military hospitals after four days' Arab control as the Turkish wounded were receiving no care. The Australians, headed by Colonel Rupert Downes, then set about cutting the death rate from seventy to fifteen a day.[98] Britain was a party to articles 4 to 20 of the 1907 Hague Convention on the treatment of prisoners, so the neglect of the Turkish hospitals was, to say the least, unfortunate.

The poor conditions for the Turkish wounded were a direct result of Allenby being instructed to promote an Arab administration, as is shown by the order received on 1 October: 'Our policy should be to encourage the setting up of either central, local or regional Arab administration, as the case may be, and work, at least ostensibly, through them entirely'.[99] This instruction was from the Foreign Office, and passed through the War Office, and it indicates how the Arabs could be useful for Britain: 'it is important that the military administration should be restricted to such functions as can properly be described as military, so as to give to no inconvenient claim where unnecessary of French civilians'.[100] In terms of international politics it must have been that the Turkish sick and wounded were marginal to the central objective of giving the impression that Feisal's Arabs were in charge.

Lt.-Gen. Chauvel's eventual assertion of control over the hospitals shows the administrative difficulties that the Arabs found themselves. At Deraa, during the advance on Damascus, looting and killing had occurred as the Arabs moved in, and Damascus also suffered from lawlessness from 30 September as Feisal's army was too small and ineffective to maintain order when dealing with

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[95] *Ibid*
[96] *Ibid.*
[97] Yale papers, box 1: file 1, 'The Turkish Hospital in Damascus', 17 Sept 1968.
[98] Hill, *Chauvel*, p.183.
[99] WO33 960, WO to GHQ Egypt, 1 Oct.1918, p 122.
[100] *Ibid.*

irregulars after booty. [101] Even though British policy was to avoid Damascus Chauvel had to march his cavalry through on the 2 October and the, 'turbulent city was instantly awed into silence'.[102] Lawrence, according to Alec Hill, opposed Chauvel's march through Damascus, and Hill adds how as soon as Chauvel, 'was made aware of Lawrence's tactics he readily accepted Captain Hubert Young's [also with the Arab army] advice to take over Djemal Pasha's house and to quieten Damascus by a quick show of force'.[103] Lawrence had recommended that Chauvel establish his headquarters in the British Consulate, but Hubert Young, 'advised Chauvel not to take over the British Consulate, because by doing so he would define the British as allies of the Arabs and not the undisputed controllers of Damascus...The point was not lost on Chauvel, who also decided, despite Lawrence's opposition, on a show of force and marched through Damascus'.[104] These differences suggest that while British policy was to allow Feisal to control Damascus, it was the British officers attached to the Arab army whose job it was to carry out this task. Chauvel's ignorance of all that Lawrence was doing suggests a division between the fighting side of the operations, and the political aspects that were separate, and not in Chauvel's domain. The political necessity of making sure that Feisal was given as much support as possible, existed within a battle plan that was the main concern of Chauvel and Allenby, both of whom helped the Arabs when they could do so without adverse effect for defeating the Turks. Chauvel's pride in his troops' achievements was a strong factor in his suspicion of the role of the Arab army following the battle of Megiddo. Alec Hill's persuasive biography of Chauvel outlines how if the Australians being the first into Damascus was militarily unimportant it, 'was not without significance to the men who had begun the long march from the Canal two and a half years before'.[105]

Having established that clear instructions were given to the E.E.F. mounted troops to avoid Damascus, it remains to examine further how and why Feisal was installed in Damascus. These two actions were connected as Feisal was not able to enter Damascus without the power of the E.E.F., and the orders given to the E.E.F. to avoid Damascus would have been meaningless without Feisal and the Northern Arab Army coming up on the right flank of Barrow's 4th Division.

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[101] For the looting (and killing of unarmed Turks by Arabs) at Deraa see Barrow, *Fire of Life*, p.211. For the anarchy which resulted from the Turks' withdrawal see *Australian Official History*, pp.768-770 & WO95/4473, DMC Oct , appendices, Adv Descorps to New Adv Descorps [DB22], 1 Oct.1918.

[102] *Australian Official History*, p.770.

[103] Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse* (1978) p.180.

[104] Knightley & Simpson, *Secret Lives*, p.113.

[105] Hill, *Chauvel*, p.178.

The establishment of Feisal in Damascus

T.E. Lawrence's actions at Damascus's fall confirm the view that the British carefully installed Feisal by removing the rival Kadir family. Lawrence was the *primus inter pares* of the British officers assigned to help Feisal. The forum for these officers was the Arab Bureau. Bruce Westrate's comment that the, 'Arab Bureau's grand design for Syria, for all its imperial promise, foundered on the shoals of European diplomacy' points to the role of the Arab Bureau in promoting Feisal, and their subordinate position within wider political concerns for Britain. The Arab Bureau were not 'starry-eyed romantics' but had a 'fundamentally different imperial concept' to Delhi and London: 'Theirs was a more modern...stratagem incorporating mechanisms of artifice and manipulation that would bestow the necessary flexibility to confront the rising tide of Arab nationalism and extend Britain's stay in both India and Egypt.'[106] While there were differences between London, Delhi and Cairo, their imperial aim was the same: 'the road down which the Arab Bureau marched could only have been paved in London'.[107]

The difficulty for the War Cabinet were all the other considerations for Britain in the coming peace conference, and while arguments advanced by officers in Cairo 'were compelling, larger considerations irresistibly intruded' back in London.[108] Both London and the Arab Bureau were supporting Feisal, but London's need to look at the Britain's needs in the round meant that she was not always as eager as the Arab Bureau to promote the Arabs to the exclusion of all other considerations. The War Cabinet wanted to hold on to Syria to give negotiating strength against future uncertainties, but the War Cabinet was also mindful of the European peace settlement, and, indeed, of other potentially useful Arab leaders in the region.

Once Britain had decided what her position would be in the Levant she came to terms with her ally France. Britain and France had been through four years' hard fighting together, and Britain's relationship with the Hashemites should be measured against this. When there was the danger of 'permanent damage to Anglo-French relations' in September 1919 Britain withdrew from Syria as, 'French support and friendship, both in Europe and throughout the East, was more important to Great Britain than was that of the Arabs'.[109] The French, for all their complaining about British perfidiousness, shared this sentiment: 'He

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[106]Westrate, *The Arab Bureau: British Policy in the ME 1916-20* (1993) pp.172, 205.
[107]*Ibid.*, p.206.
[108]*Ibid.*, p.172.
[109]D.Stevenson, *The First World War and International Politics* (1988) p.298; M.L.Dockrill & J.Douglas Goold, *Peace without Promise: Britain and the Peace Conferences, 1919-23* (1981) p.167.

[Clemenceau] again reverted to the supreme importance he attached to maintaining the unity between Great Britain and France'.[110] In the long-term Feisal could not hope to compete with France for influence. As Arthur Hirtzel at the India Office pointed out: while the Arabs were of parochial importance, cordial relations with France were of ecumenical importance.[111]

However, the eventual withdrawal of the British from Syria in late-1919 was not at all apparent in 1918 as the E.E.F. did its best to skirt Damascus to give Britain certain short-term advantages. It is to these immediate advantages that attention now needs to be focused.

When Lt.-Col. Olden's Australians were forced through Damascus as dawn broke on 1 October they halted at the Town Hall, and Brig.-Gen. Wilson's record of what followed shows how the Kadir brothers had quickly taken charge following the Turks' retreat:-

> Major OLDEN[112] then asked for the civil Governor and was told he was upstairs. Major OLDEN then dismounted and went into the Town Hall, here he found a large assembly of notables and people in uniform, as if arranged for some public function. EMIR SAID was sitting in the Municipal chair, Major OLDEN asked for the Civil Governor, EMIR SAID arose and came forward as such and shook hands. Through an Interpreter EMIR SAID said:- 'In the name of the Civil Population of DAMASCUS I welcome the British Army.'[113]

Emir Said of the Kadir family was not Britain's choice as governor. Lt.-Col. Olden had taken the surrender of Damascus at around 07.00 hrs, but by 09.00 hrs Lawrence was reporting back to G.H.Q. how on, 'arrival at the Serai Shukri Pasha el Ayoubi was appointed Arab Military Governor as all former civil employes [sic] had left with Jemal Pasha'.[114] Shukri Pasha was Britain's second choice, as Rikabi Pasha, an Ottoman officer in charge of the defences of Damascus and sympathetic to Feisal, had gone out to meet General Barrow, and was therefore temporarily unavailable. Both were, however, suitable for the post of governor, and had long-standing links to Feisal. Lawrence had visited Damascus in June 1917 to, 'make arrangements with prominent members of the Freedom Committee in Damascus for the action to be taken when the Turks were

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[110] D.R.Watson, *Georges Clemenceau: A Political Biography* (1974) p.371.

[111] In Dockrill & Goold, *Peace Without Promise*, p.154.

[112] The CO of 10 ALH (Todd) was weak from a wound. He rejoined in time for Megiddo, but by the time Damascus was reached, Olden, the 2i/c, was in command.

[113] WO95/4473, DMC, Sept.-Oct. separate file, '3rd LH Bde. Report on Occupation of Damascus on 1 Oct.1918', by Brig Gen Wilson, 25 Oct.1918.

[114] M.Brown (ed), *The Letters of T.E.Lawrence* (1988) p.155 (Lawrence to GHQ, 1 Oct.1918).

finally expelled', and on this trip he also met Rikabi Pasha [115] With Shukri's appointment Lawrence began the process of removing the Kadir brothers. When Chauvel, as cavalry commander, motored into Damascus on the morning of 1 October he encountered Lawrence, 'with an official whom he introduced to me as the Military Governor (SHUKRI PASHA)'.[116]

Harry Chauvel remarked to C.E.W. Bean in 1929 that nothing had been said, 'by Col. Lawrence at the time about the claims of the Emir Said Abd-el-Kadir. I did not learn of these, or that it was he who had surrendered the city on behalf of the inhabitants to Major Olden of the 10th Light Horse, until later.'[117] Chauvel's son-in-law wrote to Alec Hill in 1968 concerning Chauvel, and pointed out that Chauvel had, 'asked Lawrence who was the head man...or Mayor and Lawrence knowing otherwise, deliberately put my father-in-law with the wrong man. Sir Harry proceeded to make arrangements with the wrong man and consequently landed himself in a good deal of trouble with various people, including the French.'[118] These actions of Lawrence fitted in neatly with British political aims for Feisal. They also suggest that Chauvel did not seem fully aware of Lawrence's political tasks. Archibald Wavell makes this point writing how Lawrence, 'puzzled and troubled Chauvel, the military commander, who was not prepared to deal with delicate political problems'.[119]

It is not known what Lawrence's precise instructions for Damascus were, and therefore whether he exceeded them. Part of the explanation for this state of affairs can be found in a letter Wingate sent to Hussein in June 1918: 'As it would be impossible to write on paper a complete account of all things, I have decided, with the agreement of General Allenby...to send Colonel Lawrence to explain to you verbally the whole strategy of the campaign...It is not prudent to write details of such things on paper.'[120] This was nonsense inasmuch as memoranda, notes, reports and the like were the usual means whereby policy was decided. It was not that there was a cabal of British officers based within the Arab Bureau, and that these officers in Cairo and with Feisal were deceiving London. To elevate Feisal was a British aim and the explanation for the absence of written orders was that the turmoil surrounding Damascus's fall left decision-

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[115] Quote from R.Graves, *Lawrence and the Arabs* (1927) p.189. For meeting Rikabi see FO882/16, Lawrence to Clayton, 10 July 1917.

[116] WO95/4473, DMC Sept -Oct. separate file, Chauvel to CGS GHQ, Narrative of Operations of DMC, 23 Oct.1918, p 16.

[117] Allenby papers, 2/5/16, Chauvel to Allenby, 22 Oct.1929 encl. Chauvel to Bean, 8 Oct 1929, p 6.

[118] Mitchell Library Sydney (Australia), ML Doc1344, Chauvel's son-in-law to Hill, 20 June 1968 (copy in IWM Lawrence papers, 122 Chauvel k59490 also).

[119] Wavell, *Allenby* (1941) p.285.

[120] FO882/19, series b, Wingate to Hussein, 16 June 1918.

making in the hands of comparatively junior British political officers operating in the field.

T.E. Lawrence acted, on occasion, very independently, but he was some distance from G.H.Q. and London and was having to make decisions in vexing times. Lawrence ended up as a scapegoat for those angry at the idea that the Arabs were first into Damascus; ignoring those higher up the chain of command responsible for this act. Elie Kedourie in *England and the Middle East* puts it with more vigour:-

> On the threshold of the contemporary Middle East stands the figure of T.E. Lawrence, an object at once of awe and pity. He is a portent, a symbol of the power of Chance over human affairs, and of the constant irruption into history of the uncontrollable force of a demonic will exerting itself to the limit of endurance. The consequences of his actions have touched numberless lives, and yet their motives were strictly personal, to be sought only in his intimate restlessness and private torment.[121]

Is it reasonable to make Lawrence bear such a cross? Lawrence, as Kedourie would admit, was part of the British policy, 'to checkmate the French, who claimed the area [Syria] and whom the British considered to be their dangerous rivals'.[122] Kedourie remarks on the, 'extravagance to which so many writers on the subject of Lawrence are driven' as they 'endow Lawrence and his misadventures with a universal, a cosmic, significance'.[123] But Kedourie goes on to write how between 1916 and 1922, 'Lawrence was involved in a complex web of war, politics and diplomacy', pointing to the need for historians to place Lawrence in his 'proper historical context'.[124] So is the explanation for Lawrence's actions in September-October 1918 to be found in his 'demonic will', or in British foreign policy? Lawrence's 'demonic will' perhaps ascribes a little too much to one man. It is also arguable that Lawrence's 'misadventures' were far from being that, but were an attempt to carry out such orders as had been issued.

T.E. Lawrence's account in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1935, privately printed 1926), which lessens the part of the E.E.F. at Damascus's fall, should be viewed in light of the fact that Lawrence was not necessarily being deliberately misleading, but trying to write an account on events about which he knew more than he was able to record in his book. Lawrence's final chapters in *Seven Pillars* on the fall of Damascus do not convey what he knew about British policy towards Syria: policy which it was his job to help implement. Lawrence does

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[121] Kedourie, *England and the Middle East* (1987) p.88.
[122] Kedourie, *Islam in the Modern World* (1980) p 76.
[123] Kedourie, 'Lawrence & his Biographers' in *Islam in the Modern World*, p.266.
[124] *Ibid.* p.267.

attest to his level of knowledge writing passages such as: 'He [Allenby] hoped we would be present at the entry, partly because he knew how much more than a mere trophy Damascus was to the Arabs'.[125] Lawrence's readable account in *Seven Pillars* should not detract from the serious job which he had in the chaotic few days of September-October 1918 of helping to secure Britain's imperial position.

Harry Chauvel and Lawrence in their post-war accounts of the campaign were talking about different things; it was as though they were arguing past each other.[126] Lawrence had reasons for leaving things out of *Seven Pillars*: not least the Anglo-French rapprochement in the 1930s which necessitated some tact and suppression in what Lawrence could write in *Seven Pillars*. Chauvel's concern was with making sure that his troops got the credit that he felt they deserved.

T.E. Lawrence's part in establishing Feisal seems over stated. In an article in *The Times* in 1969 concerning Knightley and Simpson's just-published *The Secret Lives of Lawrence of Arabia* Peter Hopkirk remarked how Lawrence, 'far from championing Arab freedom, was instead working powerfully behind the scenes trying to establish British control of the Middle East'.[127] The revelatory tone of Knightley and Simpson's book rather obscures the straight forward imperial aims of Britain in 1918, and Lawrence's relatively minor part. Replying to Hopkirk's article, Jon Kimche pointed out that:-

> What is so surprising, almost incredible, is that your contributor, Mr Hopkirk...and the authors of the Secret Lives of Lawrence...should be astonished that T.E. Lawrence was 'working powerfully...to establish British control of the Middle East'. After all, Lawrence was an official of the British Government whose publicly declared policy was just that: what else were Lloyd George, Balfour, Milner, Sykes, Smuts, Hogarth—and Lawrence doing at the time?[128]

The idea that Lawrence as an archaeologist on digs in Syria before 1914 had been recruited by D.G. Hogarth as an intelligence operative is not substantiated.[129] The rather obsessive personal interest that Lawrence sometimes seems to attract is a distraction, at least to events in the Middle East. By the battle of Megiddo Lawrence as a British officer was a participant in the business of helping Feisal set up an administration in Damascus. At Damascus's fall

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[125] *Seven Pillars*, p.664.
[126] For Chauvel's record of Damascus's fall see appendix 2.
[127] *The Times*, 29 July 1969.
[128] *The Times*, 29 & 31 July 1969.
[129] See letter, R.D.Barnett of British Museum to *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 Oct.1969 & C.Ernest Dawn, 'The Influence of T.E.Lawrence on the Middle East', in J.Meyers (ed), *T.E.Lawrence: Soldier, Writer, Legend* (1989) p.60 for view that he was not a pre-war spy.

Lawrence was very anxious to get on and help the Hashemites, but Lawrence's 'vision of the future' was the same as Cairo's, and by Megiddo: 'Cairo's vision was dominant in London also. When David Lloyd George formed his government in December 1916, imperial expansionists took charge of postwar policy planning. The Prime Minister and the military rejected Sykes-Picot.'[130]

T.E. Lawrence was eager to remove the Kadir brothers not because of some personal whim but because this was essential for implementation of British policy. Why this was vital was a point raised by Elie Kedourie in his 1965 review of Gardner's book *Allenby*: 'Lawrence's enmity towards the Jaza'iris [the Kadirs, "Jaza'iris" is Arabic for Algerians] stemmed from the fact that he suspected them of having friendly relations with the French, and feared that if they were in a position to gain Faisal's ear they would influence him in favour of the French connexion. It seems a likely explanation.'[131] The available historical evidence does show the Kadirs not to be favourably disposed toward Britain, and Knightley and Simpson support this view with a corroborative quote from Ahmad Qadri: 'Emir Said and Abd el Kadir...were not nationalists working with Feisal...they were working with the Ottoman Government and were in touch with France...When Lawrence expressed a desire to depose them I agreed.'[132] Jean Pichon also supports this account of the Kadirs writing in *Le Partage du Proche-Orient* (1938) how the British, 'refusaient alors de reconnaître le gouvernement provisoire francophile qui s'était constitué à Damas sous la présidence de l'émir Said Abd-el-Kader, et ils laissaient l'émir Faiçal se proclamer chef de la Syrie indépendante'.[133] R. de Gontaut-Biron remarks on the pro-French tendencies of Emir Said which resulted in his exile earlier in the war to Anatolia.[134] The francophile disposition of the Kadirs was not new, during the 1910 Kerak uprising the Kadirs had sent spies south to investigate for the French under the cover of checking on French nuns in Kerak. The French report sent back to Paris on 10 December 1910 referred to the Kadirs as 'nos émirs'.[135]

It has been shown that Allenby was aware that there were non-military priorities behind his advance into Syria, but his exact part in these events is not altogether clear. On 7 October 1918 Allenby complained that he had not been

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[130]*Ibid.*, p.80.

[131]*Middle Eastern Studies*, July 1965, p.412. (Lawrence wrote to Hogarth in 1915: 'we can rush right up to Damascus & biff the French out of all hope of Syria. It's a big game, and at last one worth playing', from D.Garnett, *Letters of T.E Lawrence* (1938) p.196)

[132]*Secret Lives of Lawrence of Arabia* (1971) p.110. Quotation from Dr Ahmad Qadri, *My Memoirs of the Great Arab Revolt* (1956).

[133]Pichon, *Partage*, pp.152-53.

[134]Gontaut-Biron, *Comment la France s'est Instalée en Syrie (1918-19)* (1923) ft p.47.

[135]Nantes archive, Registre de Correspondance Consulaire de Damas no.42, Piat's reports to Paris, 6 Dec.1910-5 Jan.1911. My thanks to Dr Eugene Rogan for providing me with this information (personal correspondence 13 Dec.1994).

consulted on the 'Declaration to the Seven' made on 16 June 1918.[136] This declaration allowed Arab rule in areas 'liberated from Turkish rule by the action of the Arabs themselves', and presaged Feisal's entry into Damascus.[137] That Allenby had not been informed of the formulation of the declaration indicates that the work of installing Feisal was down to the Arab Bureau, and that Allenby had more immediate concerns at the battle of Megiddo. Allenby's trip to Damascus on 3 October was important, and was an attempt by the forceful commander-in-chief to restore order and inform Feisal to moderate his aims and to await the decision from London. Comments from Frenchmen like Commandant Larcher on Allenby's complicity seem excessive: 'Il lui restait [Allenby] à installer l'émir Faisal à Damas...il commençait d'autre part à poursuivre l'exécution du plan impérialiste anglais conçu: la reconstitution du le kalifat des Abbassides.'[138] The French Foreign Secretary, Stephen Pichon, remarked on how the E.E.F. was, 'planting on the entire Syrian coast the standard of the King of the Hedjaz', adding that Allenby, 'was persuaded by his entourage to promise Emir Feysul that the measures taken to entrust certain occupied territories to French administration could be in no way binding for the future'.[139]

In fact, Allenby seems to have been fairly straight in his dealings, and told Feisal that he could *not* occupy the Syrian littoral: 'Feisal is being warned that if he attempts to control the 'Blue' area [Lebanon], the settlement of which must await the Peace Conference, he will prejudice his case'.[140] 'Conspiracy' theories should be handled with some care as much of history has an accidental feel about it, as Harry Howard with the American State Department noted on British policy to the Middle East: 'Governments do not necessarily think ahead of a given problem...with the idea that, somehow or other, they will muddle through when trouble comes. I am sure that there was something of this sort in British thinking.'[141]

However, there is real substance in the charge that Britain was trying to exclude France from the Syrian hinterland, and it seems that while Allenby's military brief kept him outside the overt political acts of some British Arab Bureau officers, there was definite purpose in British actions. This view is supported by John Darwin who argues that by the summer of 1918:-

> Allenby's successes were imposing a different perspective on British policy-makers in their search for the most viable means of imperial

[136]WO33 960, Allenby to WO, 7 Oct.1918, p.136. There is a copy of the Declaration in Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (1945) appendix D & CAB24/145, report 20 June 1918.
[137]Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, appendix D.
[138]M.Larcher, *La Guerre Turque dans la Guerre Mondiale* (1926) p 304.
[139]WO106/189, Pichon to Balfour, 31 Jan.1919.
[140]Allenby hanging file, Chief Egypforce to Troopers (CIGS) London, 11 Oct.1918.
[141]Monroe hanging file, 'Notes on British Policy', Howard to E.Monroe, 4 Aug.1964.

> control. For with the rapid expansion of the area under British occupation in Palestine and Syria, the issue of France's future role in the Middle East, dormant since 1916, revived. The French were anxious to implement the partition with the least delay before the politics of the conquered Turkish provinces hardened into new and inflexible moulds. To the British, however, the promises made to the French in 1916 became more and more of an embarrassment.[142]

To prevent the French insisting on implementation of the Sykes-Picot partition of 1916 the military value of the Arabs had to be inflated, and their political presence made real, as Darwin again outlines: 'the efficacy of imperial control depended upon the untrammelled partnership of the British and their Arab collaborators'.[143] That Chauvel and Barrow seem not to have known the precise details about the plan to install Feisal indicates that this was not the only objective for the E.E.F. following the battle of Megiddo. For G.H.Q. and the War Cabinet in London the fall of Damascus was only one episode in a much greater war. Nevertheless, while there was much extemporisation surrounding Damascus's fall, the events do indicate a high level of contingency planning on the part of the British, the more so as Allenby did not think that Damascus would be captured with such rapidity. Once Allenby's caution was seen to be misplaced, the commander-in-chief visited Damascus on 3 October and temporarily settled administrative matters. The permanent settlement would have to await the deliberations in London and Paris. This whole state of affairs was a product of Britain's assiduous cultivation of the Arab Revolt from June 1916, which culminated in Feisal's contrived capture of Damascus some two years later.

The Hashemite régime which Britain created had a legitimacy problem, and had associated with it a curious assortment of Arabs. The 1919 *Who's Who* guide printed by the British for issue to the E.E.F. described Rikabi Pasha (when Rikabi returned to Damascus he replaced Shukri who went on to become the governor of Aleppo) thus: 'Avaricious, unscrupulous, and a past master in Turkish methods of intrigue'; Nuri Shalan supported, 'the Sherif's cause for what he can gain'.[144] These remarks suggest that the Kadir family had as much 'right' as Feisal to rule Damascus. Philippe David's doctoral thesis shows that five members of the Kadir family had been executed by the Ottomans during the war, and that the difficulty with the Kadirs was their francophile sentiments, and not any collaboration with the Ottoman authorities.[145] Kedourie puts it more emphatically arguing that it was, 'as though the Sharifian interest had some

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[142] J.Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East: Imperial policy in the aftermath of the war 1918-1922* (1981) pp.150-51.
[143] *Ibid.*
[144] Brunton papers, 'Who's Who in Damascus 14 May 1919'. Rikabi was 'anti-French'.
[145] David, 'Un Gouvernement arabe à Damas. Le Congrès Syrièn' (Paris 1923) pp.9-10.

transcendental merit denied to other interests, and as though the upholders of these other interests were conscienceless, rapacious sharks'.[146] W.F. Stirling, a British officer with the Arabs, remembered how Nuri Shalaan and the Ruwalla tribe, 'were prepared to join us — at a price...it was very considerable'.[147] Chauvel himself recounted how he learned on 1 October that, 'Shukri Pasha had not been elected by a majority of the inhabitants, but only by the Hedjaz supporters, that the people of substance were terrified at the prospect of Hedjaz domination, that there was chaos in the city'.[148] However, if Feisal were not installed in Damascus all the hard work expended keeping the Arab Revolt going would probably have come to nothing. The British, judging by a report by D.G. Hogarth of the Arab Bureau, were aware of the alien nature of the Hedjazi Arabs for many Damascenes. Hogarth's feeling was that the Hashemites had, 'assumed a privileged and oppressive role, and their influence is obscurantist and vicious...there is pronounced anti-Sherifian feeling', and for Feisal to prevail, 'it will demand that he assume and conduct...as a Syrian, relying on neither Sherifian nor Beduin support, but on Arab nationality.'[149] J.L. Gelvin's article in the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* supports the view that many Damascenes considered Feisal, 'to be at best exotic and, at worst, barbaric...Faysal was seen as an interloper'.[150] Indeed, once in Damascus Feisal had problems establishing his legitimacy, and had to look to previously 'unempowered or underempowered groups' to form his government.[151] In October 1918 the *sine qua non* for Feisal's success was victory by Allenby's forces on the battlefield, and removal of any Arab opponents to Hashemite rule. It was the Kadir brothers who were the main threat in this respect.

In the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* Lawrence recounted how he pronounced the Kadirs' civil government abolished, and his shorthand note: 'They took it rather hard, and had to be sent home', makes light of an action which was important, as Lawrence well knew.[152] Abd-el-Kadir was unhappy with being removed from power, and threatened Lawrence with a knife.[153] The Kadirs then 'attempted to stage a counter-revolt' on 2 October, a revolt hard to distinguish from the general disarray at the time as Druze tribesmen looted Damascus.[154] To

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[146]Kedourie, 'Col Lawrence' in *Islam in the Modern World*, p.269.
[147]Stirling, *Safety Last* (1953) p.91.
[148]Allenby papers, 2/5/16, Chauvel to Allenby, 22 Oct 1929 encl. Chauvel to Bean, 8 Oct.1929, p.7.
[149]PRO30/30/10, report by Hogarth sent to Curzon, 18 Dec.1918.
[150]J.L.Gelvin, 'Demonstrating Communities in Post-Ottoman Syria', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Summer 1994, p.25.
[151]*Ibid.*
[152]*7P*, (p.671); Lawrence papers, IWM, Misc.KK, Shorthand Notes dictated by TEL (11pp).
[153]Birdwood, *Nuri as-Said*, pp.88-89 describe this confrontation in the Town Hall.
[154]Birdwood, *Nuri as-Said*, p.89.

help end the unrest Lawrence had machine-guns 'barraged... across to blank walls'.[155] W.F. Stirling, with the Arabs, had gone for a Turkish bath with Sherif Nasir, and came out of the baths and, 'learned that the Algerians had tried to stage a counter-revolution to put themselves in power. Lawrence had been obliged to turn the machine-guns on them.'[156] The evidence was all about with dead in the streets, and Kirkbride remembered how he had to shoot looters as he walked with Lawrence in an attempt to restore order.[157] Kirkbride pointed out in a letter in 1943 that the trouble in Damascus resulted from Druze and Ruallah tribesmen looting, while many Damascenes settled old-scores with Turkish stragglers.[158]

The actions of the British officers attached to the N.A.A., coupled with the orders for the E.E.F. to avoid Damascus, provides strong evidence of a plan to make sure that the Hashemites were installed in Damascus, and inconvenient 'pretenders' such as the Kadirs marginalised. However, William Yale, previously mentioned in connection with the neglect of the Turkish hospitals, accuses Arab Bureau officers of acting beyond their orders, and Yale's comments cast a more sinister shadow on events: 'Another item which may cast some light on "would be British policy makers" in Allenby's command. I am of the opinion that General Allenby may not have known of some of the activities of his political officers.'[159] Yale goes on to say how he felt that Allenby 'had nothing to do with such shenanigans or had any knowledge of them' but:-

> My main purpose in writing this lengthy statement has to do with the question raised by others whether there was, or was not, a group of British political officers who had their own views and plans with respect to the future disposition of Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. Who may have had some backing from Cairo and perhaps from London; who did not necessarily keep Allenby informed of what they hoped to accomplish.[160]

William Yale's charge of maverick British officers misses the point that these officers must have been carrying out their orders such as they had, and that Allenby as supreme commander had to delegate responsibilities. The British political-intelligence officers with the Arabs were faced with difficult and uncertain circumstances. They could not check with home every time a decision had to be reached, and this made the officers self-reliant. Allenby's mission was to win a battle; for those like Clayton and Lawrence the task was to fulfil British imperial-political imperatives.

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[155] *7P*, p.675.
[156] W.F.Stirling, *Safety Last* (1953) p.95.
[157] Kirkbride, *A Crackle of Thorns*, p.9.
[158] Altounyan papers: hanging file, Kirkbride to Altounyan, 6 Dec.1943.
[159] Yale papers, box 1: file 1, 'The Turkish Hospital in Damascus', 17 Sept.1968.
[160] *Ibid.*

That Yale saw furtive motives behind the actions of certain British officers might be explained by the fact that he felt that some of these officers were circumscribing his movements, and were doing so because they had something to hide. If Yale were being obstructed it was probably because Yale, and French and Italian officers with the E.E.F., were an encumbrance for the British. Busy officers like Clayton did not want to be troubled by the sensibilities of an independent observer like Yale, who as America's representative with the E.E.F. had to be tolerated, but was not to be encouraged.

William Yale's comments on the failed attempt following Damascus's fall to install the Hashemites in Beirut imply that Lawrence was acting beyond his orders, as Beirut was to pass to French control: 'Rikabi told me that T.E. Lawrence had urged him to hurry to the coast and seize control of Beirut and the other coastal towns before they were occupied by the British'.[161] Yale wrote to Elizabeth Monroe in 1970 that Shukri had, 'confirmed the statement that T.E.L. had urged him to get to Beirut before the British'.[162] Writing to Yale in 1929 Lawrence denied any plan secretly to occupy Beirut saying that there was, 'nothing either Sherifian or mine, therefore, in the occupation of Beyrout...These things were as much anti-Feisal as anything.'[163] Sherifian pretensions in Beirut were rudely ended when, 'a British soldier...shinned up the flag pole and cut the [Sherifian] flag down. Rikabi returned to Damascus.'[164] In 1960 Jukka Nevakivi spoke to Nasib al-Bakri, the Arab liaison officer to Lawrence, and al-Bakri maintained that Lawrence 'definitely consented to the expedition'.[165]

It may have been that Lawrence's own francophobia influenced his actions, but this must be set against the confusion in Damascus at the time, and the fact that the Arabs were not dupes and were quite willing and able to push their own designs on Lebanon. It was probable that while Lawrence neither prompted nor inspired the Arab dash for Beirut, once it had happened Lawrence was not too concerned to end the attempted Arab occupation of the Lebanese littoral. The Arabs arriving in Damascus with Feisal had priorities which did not always easily equate with Britain's wish to manipulate Hashemite pretensions.

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[161]Yale papers, box 1: file 9, 'It Takes So Long', written by Yale on 11 Feb.1938. J.Nevakivi, *Britain, France and the Arab Middle East 1914-20* (1969) ft p.71 mentions Lawrence's connivance in sending the Sherifian commando to Beirut.

[162]Yale papers, box 1: file 9, Yale to Monroe, 9 June 1970. (In these accounts by Yale he says that he felt that the British were trying to control his movements.)

[163]D.Garnett (ed), *The Letters of T.E.Lawrence* (1938) TE to Yale, 22 Oct.1929, pp.670-71.

[164]Yale papers, box 1: file 9, 'It Takes So Long'.

[165]Nevakivi, *Britain, France and the Arab Middle East* (1969) ft p.71.(*Ibid.* Nevakivi refers to Lawrence's denial in a letter (TE to Yale in 1922) with TE saying that the move on Beirut was the result of Syrian intrigues. Nevakivi's date for the letter is 22 Oct.1922. Nevakivi must be referring to the letter to Yale on 22 Oct 1929 in Garnett (ed).)

Zeine N. Zeine asserts that Emir Said told the Mayor of Beirut, Umar Bey, to establish an Arab Hashemite government on 30 September.[166] The implication of Zeine's analysis is that the Arabs were capable of planning the attempt to get to Beirut first, and that Lawrence was not significant for organising this action. Lawrence wrote to Yale in 1929 to counter accusations that British officers had acted beyond their orders, and in this letter Lawrence pointed out how he had had great difficulty controlling the Arabs as Rikabi Pasha and the Kadirs, 'took charge, and galloped (metaphorically) straight for the coast'.[167] Zeine, who had spoken to Nuri as-Said for his *The Struggle for Arab Independence*, points out that on the evening of 3 October at dinner at the Hotel Victoria, Nuri as-Said told Clayton that a force had been sent to Beirut, whereupon France's liaison officer with Feisal, Captain Coulondre, left the dinner to try and prevent this.[168] It would seem that the Kadirs and the Hashemites both tried to secure Beirut, with the Kadirs using the façade of claiming to be Hashemite representatives. Neither were successful. Allenby quickly permitted French marines to land in Beirut, as the Levantine littoral was to go to France. That Nuri as-Said remarked to Clayton on the sending of the Sharifian commando to Beirut at the dinner *following* Allenby's visit, shows that the Hashemites were willing to test Britain's resolve, and rather diminishes the idea that British officers such as Lawrence were acting in some independent fashion and outside their orders.

What settled matters and forged a temporary agreement was Allenby's visit to Damascus on 3 October. The difficulty with the meeting at the Hotel Victoria is that Allenby imposed a form of the Sykes-Picot agreement on Feisal, an action which sits uneasily with one of the arguments of this thesis that Britain was attempting to undo the 1916 arrangement with France. The remarks of Beckles Willson when he wrote that Allenby went to Damascus with orders from London to *'Choke off Feisal and Lawrence. Dam this Arab torrent. Remember the Sykes-Picot Agreement'* thus seem incongruous.[169]

However, General Allenby's actions on 3 October accorded with Britain's aim to use Feisal's régime in Damascus. At the Hotel Victoria meeting Allenby told Feisal that the Levant seaboard was not in the Arab zone, but the Hussein-McMahon correspondence, 1915-16, had excluded this region. Feisal also had

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[166]Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence: Western Diplomacy and the Rise and Fall of Faisal's Kingdom in Syria* (1960) p.27 (Zeine's use of Arab sources makes his chapter II on the fall of Damascus particularly useful).

[167]Garnett (ed), *Letters of TE*, letter to Yale, 22 Oct 1929, p 670.

[168]*Struggle for Arab Independence* (1960) p.32.

[169]Willson, 'Our Amazing Syrian Adventure', *National Review*, Sept.1920, p.46. Zeine quotes this remark of Willson's in *The Struggle for Arab Independence*, p.29 adding that Willson was 'a well informed contemporary' (italics in original).

attached to his O.E.T.A. East administration in Syria — essentially area 'A' minus Mosul: see map 4 — a French liaison officer. While the French would be able to control the O E.T.A. West zone of Lebanon, their officer attached to the Arab régime in O.E.T.A. East was still under the supreme command of Allenby, and Syria was still garrisoned by British troops. If Britain intended to live up to her obligations under the Sykes-Picot agreement, she would have handed Syria over to France. In Palestine military necessity had excluded French joint administration, and in Syria Arab self-determination was, temporarily, going to do the same.

The period until September 1919 featured repeated efforts by France to persuade Britain to fulfil her obligations under the Sykes-Picot deal and give France what she considered to be rightfully hers. What Allenby arranged in Damascus on 3 October was probably the best interim deal for Britain to keep France and Feisal apart while the politicians in London worked out the value of Syria, and its negotiating value at the impending Paris Peace Conference. Allenby's instructions at the Hotel Victoria meeting were necessarily vague. Joyce, one of the Arab Bureau officers, remembered that while he 'never heard the actual policy' that Allenby laid down at Hotel Victoria, he thought that, 'it must have been based on very broad and indefinite lines'.[170] Thus on 17 October Allenby told Feisal that the military administration was 'purely provisional' until 'the peace conference, at which no doubt the Arabs would have a representative'. Allenby then urged Feisal to place his trust in the Allies' 'good faith'.[171] Allenby, as Yale points out, had considerable sympathy for the Arabs, but any goodwill on Allenby's part had to measure up to wider concerns in London.[172]

Britain emphasised Arab self-determination within the Sykes-Picot deal. This turned an agreement which put Syria in a French zone of influence into something quite different. Britain ignored Arab self-determination in Palestine, and this inconsistency was remarked on by Balfour when writing to Lloyd George in 1919: 'The weak point of our position of course is that in the case of Palestine we deliberately and rightly decline to accept the principle of self-determination'.[173]

Britain's rather selective use of self-determination is illustrated by the 7 November 1918 Anglo-French Declaration, a product of Britain's strong position *vis-à-vis* France, and the declaration's altruistic tone was not reflected in British policy towards, say, Egyptian home rule, or Jewish settlement in Palestine (or Indian or Irish home rule?).[174] Malcolm Yapp's conclusion that the content of

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[170]Allenby hanging file, Joyce to Wavell, 23 May 1939.
[171]J.Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near & Middle East* (1956) p.30.
[172]Yale papers, box 1: file 4, 'Position of the Syrian Question', 21 Oct.1919, p.4.
[173]Lloyd George papers, F/3/4/12, Balfour to LG, 19 Feb.1919.
[174]Copy of the declaration in appendix 6 of this thesis.

the November declaration was 'a piece of humbug as sickening as it was false' seems correct.[175] Feisal, as Britain's ally in Syria, was useful so long as Britain promoted her peculiar form of self-determination.

* * * *

This chapter has examined the orders to the advancing E.E.F. following the battle of Megiddo and has shown the purposeful need to avoid Damascus so as to help Feisal. The result of these orders on Turkish wounded left behind in Damascus has been touched upon. This chapter has looked at the actions of British officers in helping Feisal establish his government over rival claimants such as the Kadir family, and has outlined the importance of making sure that Feisal's claim to rule Syria was realised. It remains to analyse the political and imperial concerns which drove these actions. These centred on the need for Britain to obtain Mosul's oil; to modify Syria's border with Palestine and Mesopotamia; to try and cope with the changed situation in Armenia as Russia's collapse introduced chaos and uncertainty in the lands to the north of Syria and Mesopotamia.

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[175]Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East 1792-1923* (1987) p.293.

CHAPTER SIX: PREPARING FOR THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE, SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 1918.

> he [Balfour] is said to have remarked, 'As I have always told you, it was not so much the war as the peace that I have always dreaded.' (K. Young, *Arthur James Balfour* (1963) p.406.)

> La question du pétrole a tenu, dans les négociations de la paix, une place de premier ordre, — la même que, pendant cinq ans, elle avait tenue dans la guerre...'En vérité, l'avenir proclamera que les alliés ont vogué à la victoire sur une vague de pétrole!' (André Tardieu, 'Mossoul et le Pétrole', *L'Illustration*, 19 Juin 1920, p.380.)

> The soldiers had done their best (and sometimes their worst), and the turn of the politician was coming. (Leonard Mosley, *Curzon: The End of an Epoch* (1960) p.184.)

The Ottoman empire's surrender at Mudros on 30 October 1918 marked the end of the campaign of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. The discussion on the military operations of the E.E.F., and whether the campaign was judiciously prosecuted, is now concluded: the first level of analysis outlined in the Introduction. The analysis in Chapters Two and Four pointed out shortcomings on Allenby's part which hampered operations and led to unnecessary delay and complication. The argument over war strategy and civil-military relations is also brought to an end: the second level of analysis. This thesis has argued that the military, as represented by Allenby and Robertson, were faithful in the reports they produced about the Palestine campaign, although their assessments on Turkish plans and capabilities were less accurate. Lloyd George, by contrast, had an exaggerated view of what the Palestine campaign could achieve for Britain's war effort, and would have done well to heed Robertson's advice. This is not to say that Robertson and Allenby were always right, and the Trans-Jordan raids were an example of a serious blunder. Notwithstanding tactical errors the strategy of pursuing a Palestine campaign, at least in terms of winning the war, was flawed. While an argument can be made for Lloyd George's pursuit of the Palestine campaign to Jerusalem's capture, the Prime Minister's continued push for operations in the Levant beyond December 1917 is much harder to make sense of.

With the end of the war the use of the Palestine campaign to further Britain's imperial position comes to the fore. This chapter will begin the examination of this final level of study by introducing the relevant concerns for the British empire immediately following the war. Allenby's importance diminishes in this analysis as the focus of study moves to London and Paris, and how the success of the E.E.F. could be used at the peace talks. As the commander

of the powerful expeditionary force in Palestine, Allenby's role in events has been evaluated through this thesis. Up to October 1918 his status as the war-time military commander made him a pivotal figure in the Middle East during the First World War. After the armistice on October 1918 Allenby still had a part to play, but his influence was not what it had been up to the battle of Megiddo. This changed somewhat when Allenby became High Commissioner in Egypt in 1919, but the nature of his authority as High Commissioner was different to what it had been when he was the commander of the E.E.F. As the High Commissioner Allenby's focus also widened as he had to deal with profound and far reaching political matters on Egypt's future, and military necessity was no longer his determining priority.

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The Paris Peace Conference and the treaties of Versailles, Neuilly, St. Germain, Trianon and Sèvres resulting from the peace talks are substantial and significant topics for analysis. In three chapters (Six to Eight) this thesis can only look at those aspects of the talks which had relevance to Britain's use of Allenby's victory at the battle of Megiddo, and his subsequent occupation of Syria. This chapter has a narrow focus on Britain's relationship to Feisal and Allenby's army of occupation. Britain was not considering Syria in isolation, but as part of an overall strategy for Britain and her empire. The Middle East was part of this imperial strategy whose most immediate concern after the war was with the important European settlements with Germany and Austria-Hungary. This wider dimension should be borne in mind in what is to follow in this study. Harry Howard's remark to Elizabeth Monroe about British policy towards the Middle East during the war is equally applicable once the fighting had ended: 'a war was going on, a really great war, and that the diplomacy even in this part of the world was part and parcel of the measures taken to fight the war'.[1]

The long-term worries expressed by Amery, and outlined in Chapter One, lie behind the attempt to establish British rule, whether direct or by proxy, in parts of the Middle East. Germany's defeat, however, was more rapid and complete than expected, so the situation was not one of a largely undefeated Germany as Amery had envisaged. Amery's concerns show the wider dimensions of British imperial thinking; Chapters Six to Eight look at the particular circumstances in the Middle East after the war.

If this thesis concluded at the armistice, the actions of Allenby from June 1917 would be incomplete, and why Britain wanted to pursue the campaign could not be explained fully. One would be left with something of a regimental-style

[1]Monroe hanging file, 'Notes on British policy in ME', Howard to Monroe, 4 Aug.1964.

campaign history, albeit with political proportions for civil-military relations, but without any Clausewitzian dimension regarding war as a continuation of political intercourse by a different method. This is not satisfactory, and analysis is required to place the Palestine campaign in its proper context. The Palestine campaign had non-military proportions beyond fighting and winning battles, and the previous chapter on Damascus's fall outlined some of these. The most obvious non-military advantage Britain gained from Allenby's victory was the power that his successfully conducted campaign gave to dictate at the peace talks. Brig.-Gen. Walker at the Supreme War Council commented on this in October 1918 reporting how Allenby's success following Megiddo, 'presents a factor of considerable importance, as it will strengthen the hands of the British delegates'.[2] The last three chapters of this thesis will follow three concerns of Britain at the peace table: control of Syria and the Trans-Caucasus[3], oil, and the borders of Syria with Mesopotamia and Palestine; this thesis will relate these concerns to Allenby's army of occupation and the political decisions taken in London and Paris.

After the armistice Lloyd George was not restricted in his political negotiations as he had been when the war continued and was foremost in people's minds. His lack of trained military knowledge was no longer the disadvantage it had been. This does, however, create some difficulty in that it is not always apparent what it was that influenced the Prime Minister to act as he did at the peace talks. What impressed the Prime Minister to make the decisions he did? Much of this chapter looks at the deliberations of Britain's Eastern Committee, and it is tempting to conclude that Lloyd George implemented the conclusions of this influential committee. The reality was more complicated as the Prime Minister sometimes seemed to act alone and informally, and be willing to make 'snap decisions'.[4] Thus the connection between the theoretical framework of British imperial decision making in the Middle East, as expressed by, say, the Eastern Committee, and what Lloyd George decided seems abstract.

Lloyd George organised a secret deal for the Middle East with Clemenceau in December 1918 without telling anyone. The individual role of Lloyd George in determining foreign policy is illustrated in *The Times Survey of Foreign Ministries* thus: 'The assumption of a dominating role in the making of foreign policy by the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, not only in the latter years of the war but also in all the stages of peacemaking, had seriously eroded Foreign

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[2]Milner papers, V/B/359, 'British Interests at the Peace Conference', 26 Oct.1918, GS6 SWC, by Brig Gen H.Walker [the surname is hard to decipher], E Branch GS at Versailles.

[3]By 'Trans-Caucasus' is meant the modern republics of Armenia (with 1877-1921 border incl. Kars, Ardahan & Batum), Georgia and Azerbaijan, as well as eastern Anatolia and such towns as Trebizond, Erzerum and Bitlis (see maps 4 & 4a).

[4]Phrase used by Hankey in Hankey papers, 1/5 diary, 11 Dec.1920.

Office prestige'.[5] Michael Dockrill and Zara Steiner make a similar point in the *International History Review*, commenting not only on Lloyd George's antipathy to the Foreign Office, but also to his idiosyncratic approach to the peace negotiations: 'The Foreign Office found it particularly galling that they could not reach Lloyd George even through Balfour. Given the Prime Minister's long-standing distaste for official routine, files, and reports, it is very doubtful whether he bothered with the memoranda sent to him through the official chain of command.'[6] C.J. Lowe and Dockrill assert in *The Mirage of Power* that British foreign policy from 1919 until the Genoa conference of 1922 was 'largely determined by Lloyd George'.[7]

Kenneth Morgan, at first sight, also backs up the above quotations writing that it, 'was the Prime Minister who dictated the main thrust of British foreign and defence policy', adding that Lloyd George, 'relied on his own intuitions'.[8] Morgan agrees that Lloyd George by-passed the Foreign Office and acted in a 'presidential' way, and that this caused personal difficulties with other politicians. But Morgan also shows how Lloyd George did not foist, 'his whims on unwilling or deceived colleagues'.[9] Lord Curzon was a good example of someone with whom Lloyd George had personal problems with, but beyond, 'these personal conflicts, on the content of policy Lloyd George and Curzon were consistently in agreement'.[10] In his biography of Curzon it is pointed out by David Gilmour that with Curzon and Lloyd George their, 'views were not in fact so different as their personalities, and they had a reluctant mutual respect for each other's abilities'.[11] Britain had effective and established organisations such as the Eastern Committee and the Political Intelligence Department to inform the Prime Minister, and Lloyd George added to the information supplied by the use of experts to provide specific advice. To say that Lloyd George ignored the memoranda sent to him is to make a strong statement, and in the Middle East the Prime Minister's actions refute the idea that he was acting rashly and without taking into account the expert advice provided.[12]

In fact, the Prime Minister did follow the thrust of what policy-makers in fora like the Eastern Committee concluded. Where Lloyd George differed from

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[5]V.Cromwell, 'United Kingdom—The Foreign & Commonwealth Office' in Zara Steiner (ed), *The Times Survey of Foreign Ministries of the World* (1982) p.560.
[6]Dockrill & Steiner, 'The Foreign Office at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919', *The International History Review*, January 1980, p 67.
[7]Vol.ii, *British Foreign Policy 1914-22* (1972) p.335.
[8]*Consensus and Disunity: The Lloyd George Coalition Government 1918-22* (1979) pp.111-12.
[9]*Ibid.*, pp.111, 115.
[10]*Ibid.*, p.114.
[11]Gilmour, *Curzon* (1994) p 491.
[12]It was more with the Turkish settlement that Lloyd George acted impetuously, and this led him to sponsor the Greek invasion of Anatolia in 1919, and resulted in the crisis at Chanak in 1922.

established practice was in the way he conducted policy, not in the actual imperial policies he pursued. This was a matter of style as opposed to one of substance, as Gilmour again observes: 'Although a statesman and a patriot, he [Lloyd George] remained at heart an adventurer, fond of intrigue and surreptitious methods'.[13] Lloyd George was reliant upon the support of Conservative M.P.s after the December 1918 'coupon' election, and it was more that Lloyd George 'behaved' like a autocrat than that he really was one.[14] Andrew Bonar Law's remark that Lloyd George 'was all right as a drummer in a cavalry charge in war but we did not want a drummer in hospital' ignores that it is not apparent that Lloyd George's critics could have done any better in the maelstrom of the Paris Peace Conference.[15] Lloyd George was a skilled and shrewd political operator; he was necessarily tough as he tried to secure Britain's future in the difficult years of 1918-20. It does not follow that Lloyd George ignored the advice given to him, more that he had his own way of acting on advice given.

That Lloyd George had some leeway to act on reports and assessments given for the Paris Peace Conference was explained, in part, by Arthur Balfour, who, as Foreign Secretary in Paris, did not disturb Lloyd George: 'The Foreign Secretary played lawn tennis, went to concerts and charmed everyone with his exquisite manners, but foreign policy in its essential was conducted by the Prime Minister'.[16] Balfour's charm and intellect did not always lend itself to decision-making, as Balfour himself admitted: '"But what I always forget...is the decision come to. I can remember every argument, repeat all the pros and cons, and even make quite a good speech on the subject. But the conclusion, the decision, is a perfect blank in my mind."'[17] Balfour's predicament was not typically shared by Lloyd George who was willing to make bold decisions if and when necessary.

The Eastern Committee's deliberations provided a practical framework for the priorities of Lloyd George as he tried, from September to December 1918, to make use of Allenby's successes. A committee such as the Eastern was pivotal in evaluating Britain's worries. Lloyd George did make unilateral decisions. That his decisions matched up with the concerns expressed by the Eastern Committee indicates that the Prime Minister was aware of Curzon's committee, and was informed by the committee's deliberations.

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[13]Gilmour, *Curzon* p.534.

[14]M Pugh, *Lloyd George* (1988) pp 129-31.

[15]Quoted in C.J.Lowe & M.L.Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power* (1972) vol.ii, p.336.

[16]Gilmour, *Curzon*, p.503. *The Spectator*, 8 Apr.1995, p.47: 'Politeness is best exemplified by Balfour's remark when asked what he thought of the German delegation at the signing of... Versailles: "I don't know. I do not stare at gentlemen when they are in distress".'

[17]Gilmour, *Curzon*, pp.503-4. For similar comments on Balfour see A.Lentin, *Lloyd George, Woodrow Wilson and the Guilt of Germany* (1984) pp.124-5.

The occupied territories administration (O.E.T.A.) established by Allenby at the Hotel Victoria meeting on 3 October 1918 had been agreed on in London by Britain and France on 30 September.[18] The O.E.T.A. zones left France in an 'extremely precarious' position, as British troops were in effective control of the whole area.[19] France did not have the power to establish something more advantageous for herself.

The answer to why Britain should seek to exclude France from Syria is to be found partly in the long-term imperial concerns outlined by those such as Amery, but also in a more immediate worry in late-1918 which made France's presence in Syria seem more of a threat. This anxiety centred on Russia, and was to dominate British foreign policy in the territories from Istanbul to Kabul in the immediate post-war years. Russia's gradual collapse from 1917 meant that much of the focus of British thinking in relation to Syria was with the Trans-Caucasus to the north. This was part of the wider problem of the repercussions of the Russian Revolution. The Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917 accelerated the collapse of the Tsarist army and resulted in anarchy in the Trans-Caucasus and Central Asia.[20] It also resulted in the formation of a revolutionary régime in Moscow, which while weak, still represented more of a threat, an ideological threat, to the British empire than imperial Russia.

Britain's involvement in the Russian Civil War is partly explained by this hostile attitude towards the Bolsheviks.[21] By the autumn of 1919 Britain had chosen a policy of supporting friendly peripheral states to contain Soviet Russia.[22] This was allied to continued support for the White Russian armies opposing the Bolsheviks, notably General Anton Denikin, who, in September 1919, launched an offensive on Moscow. Denikin's ultimate defeat, along with the other White armies, proved that the new Soviet régime would not easily be banished. Until late-1919 Britain continued her support for anti-Bolshevik forces, and policy towards Syria must be viewed considering British imperial concerns over the collapse of Tsarist Russia. The autumn of 1919 was a favourable time for pulling out of Syria for a number of reasons, including domestic British worries over demobilisation, and the need for retrenchment and imperial consolidation. But the gradual re-assertion of Bolshevik control, ultimately to the Trans-Caucasus, was also a factor; as was the Kemalist Turks' re-occupation of

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[18]The final conference at the FO on 30 September at which the OETA system was established is detailed in appendix A of 34th meeting of the Eastern Committee, 3 Oct.1918 in CAB27/24 & Curzon papers, MssEur F112/274.

[19]Jukka Nevakivi, *Britain, France and the Arab Middle East 1914-20* (1969) p.77.

[20]Or November 1917 according to the Gregorian calendar used outside Russia.

[21]Britain's initial involvement in northern Russia in 1918 had more to do with simply continuing the war and tying down German troops. With the end of the war priorities changed.

[22]This policy is outlined in J.Bradley, *Allied Intervention in Russia* (1968) p.165.

eastern Anatolia. This is paradoxical, as Bolshevik rule would seem to be the worst solution for Britain. But the Bolsheviks' adoption of traditional diplomacy, coupled with their consistency, was preferable to anarchy as disorder made British planning difficult. Order and stability were restored, and the short-lived Armenian republic was allowed to atrophy. This state of affairs made French control of Syria in late-1919 more acceptable. There was not the worry of the French gaining control of parts of Turkish and Russian Armenia in addition to Syria. Britain's strategists were convinced that whichever power controlled Armenia would be in a strong position to dominate the Trans-Caucasus region north of eastern Anatolia.

The position in Trans-Caucasia was outlined in a Foreign Office minute in May 1919 on a proposed evacuation of the area by British troops who had moved in after the war:-

> the expediency of our remaining in the Caucasus — leaving military considerations out of the question — entirely depends on the character of our future policy towards Russia. If we wish, and expect to see, a new centralised Russia in the near future, I doubt if we should do much good by remaining in the Caucasus now since the Trans-Caucasian Republics are bound to be re-united to such a centralised Russia, whatever their political history in the intervening period may be.[23]

Order, even Bolshevik order, was preferable to no order. Lord Robert Cecil pointed out to Stephen Pichon, the French Foreign Secretary in October 1919 that the, 'arrangements contemplated for the North Eastern part of Armenia have been completely upset by the collapse of Russia'.[24] The fall of the Romanovs disturbed the geopolitics of the Trans-Caucasia. The worry for Britain was whether France would obtain a commanding position in Armenia, especially as it 'was no secret that' France's 'intention is to create a Great Syria...Their policy is to get a Protectorate over Armenia.'[25]

The three months to December 1918 were crucial as they represented the short period before the Paris Peace Conference when all the participants could prepare. For Britain nowhere was this more evident than in the deliberations of the Eastern Committee, chaired by Lord Curzon — 'a consummate controller of committees'.[26] Although it had been holding meetings since March 1918, it was only with the defeat of the Ottoman empire that the Eastern Committee could

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[23]FO371/3662/71722, 'Proposed Evacuation of the Caucasus', 13 May 1919, p.38.
[24]Curzon papers, MssEur F112/277, letter Cecil to Pichon, EC1915, 12 Oct.1918.
[25]Kerr papers, GD40/17/37, Mallet (in Paris who had just spoken to an Armenian delegate) to Balfour [or Lloyd George?], 9 Jan.1919.
[26]E.Goldstein, 'British Peace Aims & the Eastern Question: The Political Intelligence Department and The Eastern Committee, *Middle Eastern Studies*, October 1987, p.423.

deliberate in an atmosphere of peace, as opposed to having to deal with all the pressing priorities of war.[27]

There were six meetings of the Eastern Committee between September and December 1918 dealing with British policy on Syria.[28] Curzon, the chair of the committee, was a member of the War Cabinet, an eastern expert, and a future foreign secretary. The committee was a high-powered forum including members such as Smuts, Lord Robert Cecil, General MacDonogh, Arthur Balfour, General Wilson (the C.I.G.S.), Edwin Montagu, Eyre Crowe, and Mark Sykes. Erik Goldstein's article on the Eastern Committee and the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office shows how Britain carefully examined and articulated her Middle Eastern desiderata to achieve the destruction of the Sykes-Picot treaty so as to secure Britain's imperial position.[29] These preparations were to present France with a formidable opponent at the Paris Peace Conference.

On 26 September, before Damascus's fall, Curzon noted how considering Allenby's success it, 'seemed opportune for the committee again to consider the desirability of arriving at a proper understanding with the French'.[30] The following three months were to be decisive as Britain forced the French to acquiesce in altering the Sykes-Picot deal. The view within the Eastern Committee was that the, 'Foreign Office appeared now to be relying upon the Sykes-Picot Agreement, from which the Committee had hitherto been doing their best to escape'.[31] The Foreign Office's attempt to maintain diplomatic etiquette by keeping to the agreed Sykes-Picot treaty was to be over ruled. The stance of the Foreign Office also contrasted with the feelings of the British officers involved in Arab operations, as John Charmley notes in his biography of George Lloyd (the future Lord Lloyd): 'The "spinelessness of the F[oreign] O[ffice]" over opposing French ambitions in the Hedjaz made his [Lloyd's] blood boil'.[32]

General Allenby's arrangement for the administration of Syria and Lebanon, which he outlined at the Hotel Victoria meeting on 3 October, was described by Robert Cecil as 'purely provisional'; Curzon added that, 'the Eastern Committee had for a long time been proceeding on the hypothesis that this Anglo-French Agreement of 1916 was out of date and unscientific, and that it was desirable to get rid of it'.[33] General MacDonogh stressed how Allenby's administration must 'be military and not civil', and the 30 September Anglo-

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[27]Eastern Committee formed from pre-March 1918 Middle Eastern, Persian & Mesopotamian committees.

[28]26 September, 3 and 16/17 October, 27 November and 5 and 9 December.

[29]E.Goldstein, 'British Peace Aims, *Middle Eastern Studies*, October 1987, pp.419-36.

[30]Meetings in Curzon papers, MssEur F112/274 & CAB27/24. 26 Sept.1918, p.8. Following Eastern Committee references all from Curzon papers

[31]*Ibid.*, p.9.

[32]Charmley, *Lord Lloyd and the decline of the British Empire* (1987) p.63.

[33]EC, 3 Oct.1918, p.2.

French arrangement from which Allenby instructed Feisal at the Hotel Victoria was the precursor to the 7 November Anglo-French declaration. In clause III of the 30 September statement the British and French governments agreed to make a statement, 'that neither Government has any intention of annexing any part of the Arab territories'.[34] France's weak position was evident in this statement which, 'was specially inserted at our instance, and not very willingly agreed to by the French'.[35] Lord Robert Cecil added that 'we should be compelled to retain some effective control to prevent the return' of the *vilayets* of Basra and Baghdad to the Turks.[36] The inconsistency of Britain's position is readily apparent as she applied Arab self-determination only to those areas which Britain did not wish to acquire. The altruistic tone of clause III, and the resulting 7 November declaration, was designed to promote Britain's position in the Middle East. Smuts tried to justify British policy saying that while Syria was capable of self-government, Palestine and Mesopotamia were not. Smuts' analysis was geared to giving Britain, 'effective control in both Mesopotamia and Palestine, while limiting the role of France in Syria'.[37]

General Allenby was in an exposed position as he was having to fend off the French in Syria, and this was highlighted by Lord Robert Cecil who pointed out that, 'he would make clear to the French Government that General Allenby was left absolutely free to refuse to set up anything in the nature of a "civil" administration in any occupied territory. The French had, however, been anxious to know how long military administration was likely to last'.[38] There were a number of reasons for delaying French rule in Syria, one being the border of Palestine which under the Sykes-Picot treaty excluded Galilee. Mark Sykes remarked on this in the Eastern Committee on 3 October, and pointed out how the springs at the foot of Mount Hermon which commanded the waters of the River Jordan, 'should go with Palestine, and that some rectification of the frontier was essential'.[39] Herbert Samuel on becoming High Commissioner in Palestine in 1920 wrote to Curzon saying that he had, 'no news as yet as to the Northern Boundary. The sooner there can be a settlement of that question the better, from our point of view.'[40]

The final agreement of the 3 October meeting of the Eastern Committee stated exactly what Britain wanted: France to limit her claim to Syria only and

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[34]*Ibid.*, 30 Sept. statement, p 10.
[35]*Ibid.*, 3 Oct. EC meeting, p 3, comment by Lord Robert Cecil.
[36]*Ibid.*
[37]M.Dockrill & J.Douglas Goold, *Peace Without Promise. Britain and the Peace Conferences 1919-1923* (1981) p.149.
[38]Eastern Committee, 3 Oct.1918, p.3.
[39]*Ibid.* p.4.
[40]Samuel papers, file: 'Break up of Ottoman Empire', Samuel to Curzon, 12 July 1920.

thus exclude Mosul; the Palestine frontier to be adjusted to include Galilee; the future of Armenia to be provided for.[41] These were to be the driving concerns of British policy to November 1919, with the addition in early-1919 of a desire to modify Syria's eastern boundary with British Mesopotamia to include the town of Tadmor (the ancient Palmyra) in Mesopotamia.

The 7 November 1918 Anglo-French declaration was a product of the 30 September Foreign Office meeting with the French, and clause III that opposed any annexations.[42] Britain's real purpose for proposing non-annexation was made clear by Eyre Crowe of the Foreign Office in the Eastern Committee meeting of 16-17 October when he observed: 'In the original Draft we had introduced a definite statement against annexation in order (1) to quiet the Arabs, and (2) to prevent the French annexing any part of Syria'.[43] The more exact aim was to deny Syria to France until a more satisfactory arrangement dealing with a range of British concerns could be brokered. Britain's aim was to undo the Sykes-Picot deal and make a new and more satisfactory arrangement, and to which end Cecil sent a memorandum to the French, approved by Lloyd George, dated 8 October, outlining how: 'With regard to the future government of the other territories mentioned in the Anglo-French Convention of 1916, His Majesty's Government think it right to point out that the general position has so much changed since that agreement was entered into that its provisions do not...appear suitable to present conditions'.[44] Curzon reinforced this on 27 November when he noted in the Eastern Committee that, 'in May 1916 we were bound hand and foot by this deplorable Agreement, to which, as we know, the French seem disposed to adhere to most tenaciously'.[45] Helmut Mejcher concurs with this view writing how although the Sykes-Picot agreement:-

> was for complex reasons regarded as obsolescent by the influential Eastern Committee...the French government, despite hard lobbying by Sykes, insisted on its validity. In contrast, Lloyd George had already made it clear to his Cabinet that he would in the case of Syria use the right of conquest to reopen the whole question of the bargain made with France.[46]

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[41]Eastern Committee, 3 Oct.1918, p.6. Also for (3 Oct.1918 EC meeting, p.6) the 'Blue area to be limited if possible to Syria proper' which indicates exclusion of Tadmor.

[42]The date for the declaration is sometimes given as the 5th, 8th or 9th November. George Antonius in appendix E of *The Arab Awakening* writes: 'This Declaration was issued in Palestine, Syria and Iraq, in the form of an official *communiqué* emanating from GHQ, EEF, dated November 7, 1918'. Copy of Declaration in appendix 6 of this thesis.

[43]Curzon papers, MssEur F112/274, EC meeting 16-17 Oct.1918, p.8.

[44]*Ibid.*, appendix b, p.12.

[45]Eastern Committee meeting, 27 Nov.1918, p.4.

[46]Mejcher, 'Oil and British Policy towards Mesopotamia, 1914-1918', *Middle Eastern Studies*, October 1972, p.382.

'The right of conquest' referred to being the success of Allenby's Egyptian Expeditionary Force following its shattering of the Turkish armies in Palestine at the battle of Megiddo.

The 7 November declaration was part of Britain's recognition that, under the Sykes-Picot Agreement, 'the conquest of Palestine and Syria had been little more than a vicarious sacrifice by Great Britain...some other arrangement was required.'[47] Thus Lloyd George on 20 March 1919 told the French how he 'interpolated' the November 1918 declaration as being, 'more important than all the old agreements'.[48] The French were opposed to this as, 'in their eyes self-determination was to be interpreted in a very special way that did not conflict with the Sykes-Picot agreement'.[49] The British felt the same in that they had no intention of applying notions of self-determination to Mesopotamia or Palestine, and the declaration of 7 November, not surprisingly, 'had a great influence upon Eastern opinion' which read into the declaration a meaning not intended by the British.[50] The effect of Britain's policy, best exemplified by the November declaration, was to promote the nationalism that she did not want to encourage.

All things considered the November declaration, 'provided a valuable breathing space' while Arab and French importunities were considered, and events allowed 'to run their course'.[51] For Clayton and Hogarth the November declaration, 'was yet another step toward renunciation and displacement of the much maligned Sykes-Picot Agreement'.[52] As Balfour minuted in 1919: 'The difficulty is that we have committed ourselves to two absolutely contradictory declarations — the Sykes-Picot agreement and the declaration of 1918. The French rely on one and we on the other.'[53] The result of the 30 September Foreign Office meeting and its clause III as expressed in the November declaration was to benefit Britain. Feisal, as Britain's ally, was established in Syria and Allenby was a 'virtual dictator' in the Levant.[54] Allenby tried to be as impartial as possible with the French and the Arabs, but his political masters in London were not always so scrupulous. Britain's aim was to exclude the French until such time as British desiderata in Mosul and Palestine were secured. This was achieved with little delay and trouble when Clemenceau visited London in December 1918 and agreed to British rule in Palestine and Mesopotamia. Having

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[47]H.W.V.Temperley, *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris* (1924) vol vi, p.140.
[48]Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference* (1939) vol.ii, p.685.
[49]D.R.Watson, *Georges Clemenceau: A Political Biography* (1974) p.368.
[50]Temperley, *History of the Peace Conference*, p.141.
[51]B.Westrate, *The Arab Bureau: British Policy in the Middle East* (1993) p.168.
[52]*Ibid.*
[53]Quoted in M.L.Dockrill & J.Douglas Goold, *Peace Without Promise: Britain and the Peace Conferences 1919-23* (1981) p.142.
[54]*Ibid.*, p.144. B.Westrate writes that Allenby's 'grip was total' (*Arab Bureau*, p.169).

made this substantial concession Clemenceau discovered that it was insufficient. In early-1919 Britain attempted to secure French agreement to further border changes to Syria which would have severely truncated any French Syria, and to this the French would not agree. As David Stevenson points out the most serious challenge to the Sykes-Picot agreement came from 'British revisionist aspirations'.[55]

The November declaration and the E.E.F.s installing of Feisal in Damascus were crucial for British plans. Without Feisal as Britain's ally it is not apparent how Britain could have resisted France's entreaty to give her Syria. The role of Feisal was commented on by Lord Robert Cecil who remarked in November 1918 how he was, 'anxious to get the Arab feeling behind us, openly, as far as possible'.[56] By December 1918 the explicit purpose of the November declaration was clear:-

> Lord Curzon: Still, although disputes may arise about form and words, in substance that declaration of the 9th November, 1918, does to a large extent supersede the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and when we are counting up the various weapons we have in our hands for dealing with the Sykes-Picot Agreement later on, I think we shall find ourselves laying very great stress upon the general spirit, if not upon the actual terms, of the declaration to which I refer
> Lord Robert Cecil: That, of course, was its object.[57]

It was difficult for decision-makers within committees such as the Eastern to make any final decision while the rule of law was absent from Trans-Caucasia. Denying the French Syria was to secure their acceptance of Mosul passing to British Mesopotamia, but with the uncertainty in Armenia it was felt that it might be best to keep France out of Syria altogether. As Balfour pointed out on 9 December 1918 anything but French occupation of the lands north of Syria was desirable:-

> Mr Balfour: Of course the Caucasus would be much better governed under our aegis than it would be under the French aegis. But why should it not be misgoverned?
> Lord Curzon: That is the other alternative — let them cut each other's throats.
> Mr Balfour: I am in favour of that.[58]

The explanation for Balfour's comment was that France might not always

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[55]D.Stevenson, *The First World War and International Politics* (1988) p.296.
[56]Eastern Committee, 27 Nov.1918, p.9.
[57]Eastern Committee, 5 Dec.1918, p.7.
[58]Eastern Committee, 9 Dec.1918, pp.13-14.

be an ally, a point of view reinforced by Curzon who observed that: 'If you have a friendly France there is no danger, but if you have, as one day you may, a hostile France, why add to her power of offence?'[59] If France were to gain the mandate in Syria and Armenia it was felt that she would be well placed to threaten Britain's position in the East. The Eastern Committee on 9 December discussed this, and the consensus was that France should be denied Syria plus Armenia as France's presence to the north would give her 'a still greater area of intrigue'.[60] It was an extension of the Sykes-Picot agreement giving Armenia to France, and Britain was attempting to cancel the 1916 treaty, not generously extend it in France's favour. Armenia was to have gone to Russia under the Sykes-Picot deal, and Britain had to be circumspect to make sure that Armenia did not go to France, or some other power, who might be a threat. Bolshevik and Turkish re-assertion of control was probably the best of a bad world. For Britain the most favourable solution was an American mandate in the Caucasus, but with American isolationism this was unlikely.

In Armenia Britain's fear was that France might gain a dominating position in Turkish Armenia, Russian Armenia, and the Caucasian republics.[61] If France received Turkish Armenia, then she would, it was feared, dominate Russian Armenia to the north. If France also had Syria Britain would be, 'setting up France as a great Power occupying a huge block of territory and exercising political influence from the eastern corner of the Levant right up to the Caucasus'.[62] The uncertainty of the politics of Armenia made conclusive decision-making difficult, and made Britain cover all eventualities. This did not lend itself to rapid decision-making or implementation on the part of Britain.

General MacDonogh from the War Office clearly stated British worries on France's possible position in the Levant, and his assessment is worth quoting at length:-

> If Syria is brought into political connection with Anatolia or Armenia under the control of a great foreign power or combination of powers the whole aspect changes. Syria would then become the potential conduit for converging currents from Constantinople and Caucasia, while any foreign power which is able to concentrate troops in the neighbourhood of Aleppo is in a position to contain and threaten British forces on the Suez Canal and Mesopotamia with a single central force. The degree of danger would vary with the situation at Constantinople and in the

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[59] *Ibid.*, p.15.
[60] *Ibid.*, p.16.
[61] That is eastern Anatolia, the region round Erivan and the Caucasus area to the north. In some British reports the fear was even greater with possible French control of territory north of the Caucasian mountain range (see EC, 9 Dec.1918, pp.5-8).
[62] Eastern Committee, meeting 42, 9 Dec.1918, Curzon talking, p.5.

> Caucasus...The conclusion from the above is that from the strategic point of view we should aim at a politically detached Syria under our influence...Finally it is difficult to see how any arrangement could be more objectionable from the military point of view than the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, by which an enterprising and ambitious foreign power is placed on interior lines with reference to our position in the Middle East.[63]

Considering that France had been Britain's war-time ally, the description of her as 'an enterprising and ambitious foreign power' illustrates the rapidity with which British strategists reverted to a *national*, as opposed to an alliance, view of things.

For the Eastern Committee there was a clear choice: France got either Armenia or Syria, but certainly not both.[64] On the 9 December the members of the Eastern Committee argued that America would be a better mandatory power for Armenia than France, and surely, 'if the French are going to stay in Syria and Area A [see map 4], then still more certainly ought we to stay in Caucasia'.[65] It was no coincidence that when Britain did finally decide to withdraw the E.E.F. from Syria it came when she pulled her occupation forces out of the Trans-Caucasus area, realising that neither France, Italy, or the United States would take the mandate for Armenia. The short-lived Armenian state, 1918-21, did not survive Turkish and Soviet re-assertion of control. The difficulty of supporting the geographically isolated Armenian state led to the her demise as Britain cut her troop commitments overseas. Armenia was unable to come to terms with Turkey and Russia and this was to 'seal its doom'.[66] Britain had no long-term intention of occupying Armenia, and once she had established herself in Mesopotamia and Palestine she gave up supporting Armenian self-determination.[67] In late-1918, with the possibility of French rule in the Trans-Caucasus, to give over Syria would not have been politic, and thus the wisest policy was to stall the French. This was shown by Lloyd George's delay in implementing the understanding that he had reached with Clemenceau in December 1918. The deliberations in the Eastern Committee on 9 December illustrate the uncertainty in Armenia and how Britain was keeping open her options as far as possible.

To complicate matters there was the oil at Mosul. While drilling at Baba

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[63]Curzon papers, MssEur F112/265, 'The Strategic Importance of Syria to the British Empire', GS War Office, 9 Dec.1918. Partially quoted in Dockrill & Goold, *Peace Without Promise*, p.146. (Also full copy in FO371/4354, p.284.)

[64]Curzon papers, MssEur F112/274, EC meeting, 9 Dec.1918, pp.17-18.

[65]Eastern Committee, 9 Dec.1918, p.19 (General MacDonogh talking).

[66]Review by B.Dyer of G.Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia 1918-1919* in *Middle Eastern Studies*, May 1974, p.246.

[67]A.Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian Question* (1984) pp.117-119 (& pp.267-71).

Gurgur in northern Iraq did not strike oil until 1927, the presence of oil around Mosul was known from before the war, and in 1913 Britain had pressured the Ottoman government to assure British control of Mesopotamia's oil.[68] German geologists in 1871 had brought back reports of surface seepages being worked, and the crude at the surface was also remarked on by engineers involved in the Berlin-Baghdad railway concession.[69] The Germans during the war had even produced 10,000 gallons per day from the Qaiyara well in Mesopotamia.[70]

Oil was a primary British war aim, as Hankey pointed out to Balfour in August 1918: 'As I understand the matter, oil in the next war will occupy the place of coal in the present war...The only big potential supply that we can get under British control is the Persian and Mesopotamian supply...the control over these oil supplies becomes a first class British War Aim.'[71] Corelli Barnett's study of the Western Desert campaign in the Second World War shows how Hankey's estimate was thoughtful as the Middle East, 'was only just less important to the waging of the war than their own homeland; for it contained round Mosul...the oilfields without which the Royal Air Force, the Army and the Royal Navy would be paralysed'.[72] The French were equally concerned to gain good sources of crude, as Aristide Briand pointed out in 1920 in the French Chamber of Deputies when discussing France's attempt to gain a share in the Turkish Petroleum Company.[73]

Admiral Edmond Slade had produced a well-researched memorandum (G.T. 5267) on oil entitled 'Petroleum Situation in the British Empire' on 29 July 1918.[74] The summer of 1918 saw Britain elaborate the importance of securing sources of oil for the British empire. Having looked at Slade's memorandum, the intelligence department of the naval staff concluded in February 1919 that the security of Britain and her empire was, 'dependent on oil...fuel oil is now essential to the maintenance of British sea power...our power to control the world's shipping in time of war is likely in the future to be measured largely by the proportion of the world's oil supply that we shall command.'[75]

While the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was developing Persia's oil fields

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[68]Knowledge of oil see CAB21/119, 'Petroleum Situation', Memo on the reported oil fields of Mesopotamia and Persia, 2 Aug.1918 & P.Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq, 1914-1932* (1976) p.105.
[69]C.Tugendhat, *Oil: The Biggest Business* (1968) p.59.
[70]Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, p.106.
[71]CAB21/119, Hankey to Balfour, 1 Aug.1918. See also Hankey papers, 1/5 diary, 29 July 1918.
[72]Barnett, *The Desert Generals* (Pan 1983) p.24 (p.208 also).For a more pessimistic view on the value of Middle Eastern oil in World War Two see Yapp's review of M.Kent's, *Moguls and Mandarins* in *Middle Eastern Studies*, January 1995, p.194.
[73]*Chambre des Deputés*, 1 séance, col.2435, 25 Juin 1920.
[74]Copy of memo in CAB21/119.
[75]FO608/97/371/5/3, 'Oilfields of Persia & Mesopotamia', 26 Feb.1919, p.1.

around Masjid i-Suleiman, the other potential source was Mesopotamia.[76] General Marshall captured Mosul at the war's end, and Helmut Mejcher concludes that: 'monopolistic aims, and zeal to acquire the oil-bearing regions were the prime motives of this last step of the Mesopotamian campaign'.[77] John Cadman of the Petroleum Executive reported in December 1918 that while the Anglo-Persian Oil Company had secured Persia's oil: 'It is urged that British control should be secured at least over the whole of the Vilayet of Mosul...and that in any territorial adjustments in Syria...wayleaves for pipelines...should be secured.'[78] This had a bearing on Britain's actions as it made her look with more interest at Tadmor, located as the town was on a potential pipeline route from Mosul to the Mediterranean. Cadman continued in his report that such, 'wayleaves are regarded by the Petroleum Executive...as of vital importance'.[79] The Foreign Office minute of 7 February 1919 on Cadman's report talked of the 'battle... raging' over revision of the Sykes-Picot treaty, and that what the French wanted was 'complete equality' in the exploitation of Mosul's oil.[80] Reducing France's share in Mosul's oil, and securing pipeline routes to the Mediterranean were to be two central concerns of British policy for the Middle East from 1918.

On 1 August Hankey discussed Slade's memorandum with Admiral Rosslyn Wemyss. The Admiralty was understandably interested in oil as it was important for new oil-fired battleships, and Hankey recorded in his diary how he got Wemyss to send Slade's memorandum to the Imperial War Cabinet, 'with a covering memo...urging the importance of these [Mesopotamian] oil wells as a war aim...It is supremely important for our future to get this oil.'[81] Hankey then went on to talk to Balfour on 3 August and he wrote in his diary how he spoke to Balfour about the importance of securing the Persian and Mesopotamian oil fields, 'but he only replied that this was a frankly imperialistic war aim. Fancy allowing such humbug to stand in the way of our vital national needs.'[82] As Stephen Roskill remarks, Balfour was in a minority:-

> Though Hankey's views on post-war oil policy were without doubt as overtly 'imperialistic' as Balfour stated, the British government's aims after the war did in fact follow closely the lines proposed by

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[76]APOC is now British Petroleum. BP have just finished the second volume of their history: *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, vol.i, R.W.Ferrier, *The Developing Years, 1901-32* (1982) & vol.ii, J H Bamberg, *The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-54* (1994).

[77]H.Mejcher, 'Oil and British Policy towards Mesopotamia', 1914-1918', *Middle Eastern Studies*, October 1972, p.382.

[78]FO608/75, 'Petroleum Position of British Empire', by Cadman, Dec 1918

[79]*Ibid.*

[80]*Ibid.*

[81]Hankey papers, 1/5 diary, 1 Aug 1918. Repeated in Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets* (1970) vol.i, p.585.

[82]Hankey papers, 1/5 diary, 3 Aug.1918.

> Hankey...The end of the war by no means terminated the rivalry between the international oil companies, and the involvement in them of the British government through the powerful interest of the Admiralty.[83]

In his 1972 article, 'Oil and British Policy towards Mesopotamia, 1914-1918', Mejcher makes the same point and shows how Lloyd George's plan to use the British occupation of Syria, 'offered scope for self-interested British pressure groups and the Admiralty in adjacent Iraq...it was the oil interests and the concern of the Admiralty for the future oil situation of the Empire that exerted the severest pressure upon the Cabinet.'[84] As Mejcher goes on to show, the problem was that the United States would increasingly consume all the oil they produced, and so leave nothing for Britain, and the Admiralty was the department pushing for occupation of Mosul.[85] The present day dominance of oil reserves in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia was not so in 1918.[86] The main supplies for crude after the Great War were Russia, Mexico and America. Russia's economic dislocation following her revolution, coupled with the envisaged American use of her own supply and much of Mexico's, would leave Britain only with her limited oil fields in Burma.

Peter Beck argues that even without oil northern Mesopotamia was of great strategic importance for Britain's control of Iraq, and so with oil at Mosul French acquiescence in British occupation of northern Mesopotamia was even more essential: 'it seems reasonable to conclude that, even without oil, the British government would have been reluctant to make concessions on Mosul; a concern for the strategic integrity of its mandate, Iraq, and for imperial considerations encouraged the adoption of an uncompromising attitude'.[87]

It was vital for Britain to secure Mosul. As Mosul was promised to France it was to be Allenby's military predominance, 'which gave Lloyd George the idea of tearing up the 1916 agreement and substituting British power. He had three main enemies to contend with: the French, Balfour, and Arab nationalism'.[88] H.W.V. Temperley put the case more calmly in his *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris* observing how 'at the time of the Armistice the French were at a disadvantage in having only a few battalions in Syria, while the British had not only conquered Syria with Arab help, but were also firmly fixed in the

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[83]Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets* (1970) vol.i, pp.586-87.
[84]Mejcher, *Middle Eastern Studies*, October 1972, p.383.
[85]*Ibid.* See also C.J.Lowe & M.Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power* (1972) vol.ii, p.357.
[86]Oil was struck in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in the late-1930s. Today these two states account for 36% of the world's proved reserves (from *BP Statistical Review of World Energy*, June 1987, p.2).
[87]Beck, '"A Tedious and Perilous Controversy": Britain and the Settlement of the Mosul Dispute, 1918-1926', *Middle Eastern Studies*, April 1981, p.258.
[88]Lowe & Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power*, vol ii, p.357.

occupation of Mosul'.[89] If France had been allowed to occupy Syria she would have been in a stronger overall position in the Middle East. Allenby's occupation of Syria, and Marshall's of Mosul gave Britain a commanding position and, 'reflected not merely France's extraordinary weakness on the ground but also her remarkably slow and inadequate response to Arab and Jewish nationalism'.[90] This can be compared to Britain's relationship with the Hashemites, to the extent of establishing Feisal in Damascus on 1 October 1918, and her work furthering Zionism through the Balfour Declaration and the Zionist Commission.

Lloyd George secured Mosul's oil in a meeting with Clemenceau when the French leader came to London in December 1918 for a preliminary meeting prior to President's Wilson arrival in Europe later in December. At this meeting Lloyd George also received an assurance that Britain could have control of Palestine. Dockrill and Goold indicate that the meeting was on 1 December, although Hankey's diary records the event as happening on the 4th.[91] In *The Times*' of 2-5 December there is extensive coverage of the visit, and this shows that Clemenceau arrived on the afternoon of Sunday, 1 December, and left by a special train from Victoria at 08.10 hrs. on the morning of Wednesday, 4 December. Clemenceau came with Marshal Foch, and went straight to his embassy on the Sunday, which was when the Middle East deal seems to have been struck. Both on his way to the embassy, and going to Downing Street on the Monday, large crowds turned out who cheered and mobbed the French visitors. Colonel Repington thought that he had, 'never heard such cheering in staid old London before'.[92]

Michael Dockrill and Douglas Goold note that no record was kept of this, 'secret arrangement, which has been a matter of some dispute'.[93] The Frenchman Aristide Briand also commented on this saying that the meeting was, 'sans procès-verbal et sans secrétaire'.[94] It will be shown here that this meeting did take place and that it had significant conclusions which influenced the Anglo-French negotiations over Syria at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.

In his account of the peace conference in *The Truth About the Peace Treaties* Lloyd George made the first published reference to the December deal:-

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[89]Temperley (ed), *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris* (1924) vol.vi, pp 181-2.
[90]C.M.Andrew & A.S.Kanya-Forstner, *France Overseas: The Great War and the Climax of French Imperial Expansion* (1981) p.179.
[91]*Peace Without Promise*, p.145 & Hankey papers, 1/5 diaries, 4 Dec.1918.
[92]Quoted in E.Holt, *The Tiger: The Life of Georges Clemenceau* (1976) p.222.
[93]*Peace Without Promise*, p.145. This thesis is not the first work to examine the December accord, but this chapter goes into greater detail and places the deal in its historical context of Allenby's campaign to October 1918 and the Anglo-French negotiations on Syria in 1919 (for a summary of key existing works see E.P.Fitzgerald, 'France's Middle Eastern Ambitions, the Sykes-Picot Negotiations, and the Oil Fields of Mosul, 1915-1918', *Journal of Modern History*, December 1994, ft.3-4).
[94]Chambre des deputés, 1 séance, 25 Juin 1920, col.2435.

> When Clemenceau came to London after the war I drove with him to the French Embassy through cheering crowds who acclaimed him with enthusiasm. After he reached the embassy he asked me what it was I specially wanted from the French. I instantly replied that I wanted Mosul attached to Irak, and Palestine from Dan to Beersheba under British control. Without any hesitation he agreed. Although that agreement was not reduced into writing, he adhered to it honourably in subsequent negotiations.[95]

What Lloyd George was omitting was that it was *his* subsequent prevarication that was to cause the trouble, as Jean Pichon pointed out, also in 1938: 'La concession faite par M. Clemenceau à M. Lloyd George le 2 décembre 1918 n'avait eu, en effet, *d'autre résultat que d'inciter les Anglais à amplifier leurs prétentions*'.[96]

Maurice Hankey remembered how, 'Clemenceau had been really affected by his welcome. LLG had seized the opportunity to demand...first Mosul and then Jerusalem in the peace terms. Clemenceau in his malleable state had agreed, but said "But Pichon [French Foreign Minister] will make difficulties about Mosul".'[97] Considering the December deal in 1920, Hankey expanded on the arrangement two years earlier and remembered how Lloyd George constantly made 'informal deals' at the peace conference:-

> more especially at the Council of Four. I think he does it as a deliberate plan to avoid the speeches and argumentation of more formal conferences. An example of a similar snap decision was that by which Clemenceau gave Mosul and Jerusalem to us on Dec.4, 1918...I thought so important a decision must be confirmed at a more important conference.[98]

Hankey recollected how Lloyd George liked, 'to produce a maximum of informality; to get a snap decision at the fag end of a long meeting...and possibly to have no record.'[99] Hankey gave as an example of this the December 1918 deal to alter the Sykes-Picot agreement. That Lloyd George was 'informal' and liked to produce 'snap decisions' does not mean that his decisions were the result of anything but careful and informed planning.

Part of the explanation for Clemenceau's compliance seems to have been

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[95]Vol.ii (1938) p.1038. In fact Tardieu in 'Mossoul et le Pétrole', *l'Illustration*, 19 Juin 1920, p 381 mentions the December deal Temperley (ed), *Peace Conference* (1924) vol.vi, pp 141, 182 also alludes to a December 1918 agreement.

[96]*Le Partage du Proche-Orient* (1938) p.186 (my emphasis).

[97]Hankey papers, 1/5 diary, 4 Dec.1918.

[98]Hankey papers, 1/5 diary, 11 Dec 1920.

[99]Hankey papers, 1/5 diary, 11 Dec.1920.

the welcome given to him by the British people. When Clemenceau and Foch had come over in December Hankey remembered how they, 'were given a great military and public reception. LL.G. and Clemenceau had driven to the French Embassy and had been given a tremendous welcome from the crowd. Clemenceau was greatly touched.'[100] Clemenceau then agreed to give over Mosul and Palestine that were originally to have been under respective French and international control by the terms of the Sykes-Picot treaty.

Georges Clemenceau was no fool and was unlikely to have agreed to the loss of Mosul and Palestine unless he had good reason to believe that it was the best arrangement that he could obtain. However, the welcome afforded Clemenceau and Foch was remarkable, and would have touched Clemenceau, as *The Times*' coverage shows: 'Great crowds, eight or 10 deep, lined the whole route from Charing Cross to the French Embassy... unrestrained enthusiasm...There was one roar of welcome from one end of the route to the other...Clemenceau was continually raising his hat and was greeted at intervals with cries of "Good old Tiger".'[101] After four long years the British people wanted to show their feelings towards their ally, as *The Times* again reveals: 'Never has England welcomed a company of guests more illustrious than that which came among us yesterday... The reception which they had, in the murk and mist of a dismal December day, shows the emotion with which Londoners are filled by their visit; it is shared by the whole country'.[102]

About the December arrangement Hankey recorded in his diary how there was absolutely no account kept:-

> and I believe my diary of Dec. 4th 1918 contains the only record made at the time, and that was only second hand from LL.G. as I was not present. Nevertheless, in spite of great pressure from his colleagues, and from all kinds of interested parties, Clemenceau, who was always as straight as a die never went back on his word, and I am bound to say that Lloyd George never gave him a chance.[103]

What did Clemenceau secure for France? Clemenceau was in a weak negotiating position as British troops occupied most of the Middle East, but Harry N. Howard noted how Clemenceau obtained, 'Metz and Strasbourg without plebiscite, the Saar Basin, Rhine occupation, complete security and coal without a money advance'.[104] Howard's reference is from a debate in the French Senate

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[100] *Ibid.* Only part of this entry for 1920 is in Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets*, vol.ii.
[101] *The Times*, 2 Dec.1918.
[102] *Ibid*
[103] Hankey papers, 1/5 diary, 11 Dec.1920.
[104] *The Partition of Turkey: A Diplomatic History 1913-1923* (1966) pp 212, 228 referencing R.S.Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement* (1923) vol.iii, pp.1-19.

in 1920, where Victor Bérard said to the house: 'je n'hésite pas à dire que le jour où M. Clemenceau abandonna Mossoul, la Palestine, le Kurdistan, pour avoir Metz et Strasbourg sans plébiscite, le bassin de la Saare, l'occupuation rhénane, la sécurité complète et le charbon sans avance d'argent, il a fait de la grande politique française.'[105] France's natural priority after four years' devastation was to protect Alsace-Lorraine and her eastern border on the Rhine: the worry that was the foundation of the inter-war Maginot Line. The debates in the French Senate and the Chamber of Deputies concerning Syria show the members to have been pleased with what Clemenceau and André Tardieu had achieved. Syria was just one part of a range of concerns for the French, with the threat from Germany the paramount worry. Groups such as the Colonial Party (*parti colonial*) pressured Clemenceau but outside Europe he had, 'no clear aims at all and regarded colonial interests chiefly as bargaining counters for security on the Rhine'.[106] This state of affairs shows that France's opposition to modifying the Sykes-Picot treaty, outlined earlier in this chapter, was more a reflection of the Quai d'Orsay's viewpoint, and of France not wanting to give in too easily to Britain, suspecting — rightly as it turned out — that Britain might use French compliance to request more.

Edward Fitzgerald's recent article in the *Journal of Modern History* on French negotiations surrounding Mosul's oil is insightful, and shows that France's hold on Mosul's oil was not as complete as a superficial reading of the Sykes-Picot agreement would suggest. In December 1918 what Clemenceau conceded, 'was a great deal less than French ownership of Mosul's oil fields...Truth to tell, there was less for him to give away than historians have traditionally thought. French oil firms possessed neither the technical capacity nor the marketing channels needed to exploit Mosul's oil fields'.[107] Fitzgerald's argument that the Sykes-Picot accord 'had foreclosed' France's 'legal right' to exploit Mosul's oil suggests that Clemenceau was wise to agree to Lloyd George's demands in December 1918 as French exploitation of Mosul's oil was problematic.[108]

France was in an awkward position as domestic political difficulties and her long frontiers coupled with a diminishing population and war devastation to dictate, 'with almost imperative harshness the peace aims of France at the Versailles Conference'.[109] The two over riding concerns for France were

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[105]Journal Officiel. Senat. Débat Parlementaires. 28 July 1920, 2 séance, col.1525. The Chambre des deputés debate for 25 June 1920, 1 séance, col 2434-35, has mention of France attempting to get 25% of the TPC and its oil concession in Mosul (Briand talking).
[106]Andrew & Kanya-Forstner, *France Overseas*, p.165.
[107]E.P.Fitzgerald, 'France's Middle Eastern Ambitions, the Sykes-Picot Negotiations, and the Oil Fields of Mosul, 1915-1918', *Journal of Modern History*, December 1994, pp.723-5.
[108]*Ibid.*, p.725.
[109]G.Adam, *The Tiger: Georges Clemenceau 1841-1929* (1930) p.217.

reparations and security against Germany, with the, 'return of Alsace-Lorraine to France admitting of no discussion'.[110] For Clemenceau his talks with Lloyd George on the Sunday afternoon of 1 December 1918 seemed hopeful for France's position in the Levant. While he had lost Mosul and Palestine, Clemenceau's understanding was that he would receive in return a share in Iraq's oil, and Syria. Jean Martet, Clemenceau's secretary, details how Clemenceau told him how he had obtained for France Cilicia and Alexandretta in addition to Syria and a share in Mosul's oil, and how the French leader could not be, 'held responsible if, later on, the Turks chased us out of Cilicia'.[111] That Clemenceau also secured Cilicia in December 1918 is supported by Edgar Holt in his biography on Clemenceau, although Holt goes on to point out that a few weeks later Clemenceau complained to the American Colonel House, 'that Lloyd George had not kept his promises about Syria'.[112] However, immediately following his trip to London Clemenceau must have thought that he had acted wisely in securing what he had for France.

France wanted to obtain the 25 per cent. held by the German Deutsche Bank in the pre-war Turkish Petroleum Company that held the oil concession around Mosul.[113] By the war's end this 25 per cent. had been sold by the Public Trustee to a British government nominee.[114] Clemenceau's reading of the December 1918 meeting was that France would obtain some share of the concession. Lowe and Dockrill record that the French leader expected half of Mosul's oil and the precise percentage was obviously to be negotiated.[115] Walter Long and Senator Henri Bérenger set about this task and produced an oil agreement in April 1919.

André Tardieu's article on 'Mossoul et le Pétrole' in *L'Illustration* on 19 June 1920 provides the best outline of the complicated oil negotiations from the French side, and how they attempted to obtain a share in this vital energy source. France, like Britain, was attempting to secure good sources of crude oil. Tardieu's article shows an amenable Clemenceau arriving in London in December 1918 and wanting to come to an arrangement, but with three priorities for France: her security in Europe; an end to Franco-British problems over Mesopotamia and Syria, and support against President Wilson's ideas of self-determination; a share

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[110] *Ibid.*

[111] J Martet, *Clemenceau: The events of his life as told by himself to his former secretary Jean Martet* (1930) p.190. Translated by Milton Waldman.

[112] Holt, *The Tiger*, p 222.

[113] Deutsche Bank had 22.5%, APOC 50%, Shell 22.5% and Calouste Gulbenkian 5%: hence his nickname 'Mr 5%' (see Tugendhat, *Oil: Biggest Business*, pp.69-70). This pre-war deal was provisional so Deutsche Bank is usually said to have had 25%.

[114] M.Kent, *Oil & Empire: British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil 1900-20* (1976) p.139. Kent also details (ch.8) how Britain was trying to gain control over Royal-Dutch Shell.

[115] *The Mirage of Power*, vol.ii, *British Foreign Policy 1914-22* (1972) p.359.

of Mosul's oil.[116] According to Tardieu's account: 'Lloyd George réplique en demandant d'une part qu'un mandat brittannique soit substitué en Palestine au mandat international, ensuite que Mossoul passe de la zone franco-arabe dans la zone anglo-arabe'.[117] Clemenceau was willing to accept this as long as France got a share in Mosul's oil, that Britain would back France in opposing any American opposition to the Sykes-Picot deal, while Clemenceau's third condition of acceptance was: 'c'est que, si prévaut le système des mandats, le mandat français s'applique, au même titre, aux deux zones que distinguait l'accord de 1916, — en d'autres termes que Damas et Alep soient placées sous notre [i.e France's] mandat comme Alexandrette et Beyrouth'.[118] Allenby had allowed Lebanon to be occupied by France on 3 October 1918, and now the French wanted to acquire the hinterland stretching from Damascus through Homs and Hama to Aleppo.

The *quid pro quo* that the two premiers worked out would have meant the E.E.F. withdrawing from Syria, and once an arrangement on the French share of Mosul's oil had been resolved, the Syrian entanglement would be one between Feisal and the French. Without British backing Feisal was limited in his ability to coerce the French. Had the British withdrawn, Allenby's success at Megiddo would have been consummated, and the study in this thesis could conclude its analysis of Allenby's campaign. The problem was that Lloyd George wanted more territory than he was prepared to admit in December 1918, and so the dispute with France dragged on until September 1919, when the December 1918 deal was finally implemented. This is the subject of study of Chapters Seven and Eight of this thesis. The complicated oil negotiations had to wait on this settlement, and so it was not until 1920 that an oil agreement was finalised.[119] This differed little from two previous oil agreements in April and December of 1919 which were never ratified because of Lloyd George's attempt to force more out of France than she would accept.[120] Curzon had told the French ambassador in May 1919 that the April Long-Bérenger agreement 'had been approved' and the, 'pieces seem to have fallen into place, but the cordiality was shattered on 21 May when Lloyd George, in a row with Clémenceau in Paris over Syria,

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[116]Tardieu, 'Mossoul et le Pétrole', *l'Illustration*, 19 June 1920, p.381.

[117]*Ibid.*

[118]*Ibid.*

[119]In April 1919 Walter Long and Senator Bérenger initialed the Long-Bérenger agreement. In December 1919 Hamar Greenwood and Bérenger continued talks and in April 1920 John Cadman and Philippe Berthelot signed a modified form of the Long-Bérenger agreement at San Remo (copy of the April 1920 agreement in L/P&S/10/557 file2249).

[120]The oil negotiations are outlined in E.L.Woodward & R.Butler (eds), *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939* (1952) first series, vol.iv, pp.1089-1118. The three deals are also discussed in A.Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-1920: A Clash of Loyalties* (1931) pp.125-26. Interested readers should consult FO368/2095 for the papers surrounding the Anglo-French oil negotiations in 1919.

repudiated the oil agreement. It was confusion all round, "a complete bombshell to the Foreign Office".'[121] Jean Pichon points out in *Le Partage du Proche-Orient* how the final 1920 oil arrangement in the Middle East was delayed, 'en raison de la controverse franco-brittanique sur la Syrie'.[122] This controversy over Syria is the focus of analysis of the last three chapters of this thesis. Anglo-French differences in the Middle East were most pronounced with the dispute over Syria, with good Anglo-French relations dependent on resolution of the Syrian question. Included in the dispute over Syria was exclusion of Mosul from Syria, and restriction of Syria's border with Mesopotamia and Palestine.

The December 1918 arrangement shows both the concerns of Britain and France in late-1918, and the informal method by which a significant decision was made. This casual understanding was not officially confirmed until the formal proceedings at San Remo in the spring of 1920 when the mandate system was established. Lowe and Dockrill point out how if the December 1918 deal had been kept: 'there was something to be said for it, at least it would have created some harmony in British and French policies in the Middle East. But Lloyd George, almost from the moment of the agreement, had no intention of keeping it.'[123]

The events of the spring of 1919, examined in the next chapter, show Lloyd George's unwillingness to carry out his side of the December accord. Lloyd George refused to allow the Long-Bérenger oil agreement of April 1919 to be ratified, and did so as he wanted to limit the boundaries of Syria. This would have extended Palestine, and included the oasis of Tadmor in eastern Syria in the British zone of Mesopotamia so as to provide for a British imperial route from Egypt to India and beyond. These actions prolonged settlement as Clemenceau saw little reason in surrendering Tadmor and eastern Syria.

David Watson claims that Lloyd George's 'obsession with the Middle East was unfortunate', and he adds that the Prime Minister had a 'strange estimate' of the relative importance of the European settlement compared to the Middle East.[124] The impression given is that Lloyd George was acting unwisely, and this is not altogether accurate. Lloyd George was not eager to settle the Middle East imbroglio before the more important questions over Germany had been resolved. Lloyd George was aware of the dominant position of the European settlement, but he still managed to keep the Middle East in focus throughout the long months when Germany's future was being decided. The Treaty of Versailles

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[121]R.W.Ferrier, *A History of the British Petroleum Company*, vol.i, *The Developing Years 1901-32* (1994) p.357.
[122]*Proche-Orient* (1938) p.314.
[123]Lowe & Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power* (1972) vol.ii (*British Foreign Policy 1914-22*) p.360.
[124]Watson, *Georges Clemenceau: A Political Biography* (1974) pp.368-69.

was signed on 28 June 1919, but there were still many unsolved difficulties over the peace with Germany. It was natural, if perhaps unfair to Clemenceau, for Lloyd George to drag out the Syrian settlement until all that he could get from having the E.E.F., and Feisal, in Damascus was realised. As will be shown in Chapter Seven, the official reports reaching Lloyd George gave the impression that a reduced French Syria was vital for Britain.

Emir Feisal's predicament was that in the grand scheme of things he did not count for a great deal. While Lloyd George was concerned to make improvements to Britain's position in the Middle East he still viewed the region as subordinate to Europe, and regarded what remained of the Ottoman empire, 'as the line of least resistance, as an area from which those compensations could be extracted without which a reasonable European settlement would never be achieved'.[125] There was the worry that letting down Feisal could be the catalyst for an Arab uprising, but by late-1919 Lloyd George realised that Britain could secure her position in the Middle East without Feisal, support for whom was becoming more of an encumbrance than an asset.

The problems surrounding the collapse of Russia and the chaotic situation in the Trans-Caucasus only served to add to the British policy of procrastination, but, by late-1919, the turmoil north of Syria seemed to be less of a threat. Although it was not until the early-1920s that order was restored in the lands north of Syria, it was apparent by late-1919 that the future political structure was either continued anarchy or Turkish and Soviet control. At San Remo in 1920, Britain and France organised the mandate system whereby France was given Syria and Lebanon as class 'A' mandates. These deliberations on the Italian Riviera were simply implementation of the December 1918 deal as the final San Remo settlement, 'though not arrived at for 16 months and then only after prolonged negotiations and numerous crises, was in outline identical with had been agreed upon by December 1918'.[126] Lloyd George hoped that the French and Feisal could come to an understanding, but his unilateral withdrawal of the E.E.F. in November 1919 showed the Prime Minister's main concern, not unnaturally, to be British national interest.

It was Lloyd George who delayed the execution of the informal December 1918 deal, and in doing so incurred Clemenceau's ire. The French premier had no intention of giving any more than he had already agreed to in December 1918, and so spent much of 1919 waiting for Lloyd George to fulfil his side of their accord. Tardieu told Lord Derby (who had replaced Bertie as ambassador in Paris) in June 1919 how Clemenceau had informed him that he

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[125]H.Nicolson, *Curzon: The Last Phase 1919-25* (1934) pp.89-90.
[126]M.Dockrill & J.Douglas Goold, *Peace Without Promise: Britain & the Peace Conferences 1919-23* (1981) p.146.

had agreed to Mosul, 'being given to the English for their sphere of influence. He was not prepared to go any further than that and if he was asked to do so he would withdraw that offer and fall back on the existing Treaty [i.e. Sykes-Picot] which he said we were bound to honour.'[127] His Majesty's Government were going back on a ratified agreement and while Clemenceau acquiesced in this, he was understandably unwilling to compromise further. That Britain had entered into agreements of sorts with the Hashemites and the Zionists was not France's concern. According to Derby's account Tardieu remarked on the inconsistency of Britain's position, and with contemporary evidence Tardieu's summary of events seems just:-

> Tardieu repeated the arguments he had used to me [Derby] yesterday and there was one used by us which appears to rankle. Whenever there was a question of asking for certain territories to be given to the French the answer given was that that was impossible as it was Arab property that was being dealt with and we must keep faith with them. Tardieu pointed out that while this argument held good when it was a question of giving up territory to the French it apparently was non-existent when it was a question of giving Mosul to the English. I did not argue the point...[128]

Lord Derby's diary for June 1919 confirms the above exchange as Tardieu had told Derby that Clemenceau had agreed in London, 'to give up Mosul and also the protectorate for Palestine and that the only argument now used when asking for more was "Oh! you have given us so much already, of course it follows you must give us more".'[129] In October 1919 Clemenceau told Derby that his agreeing to Mosul passing to the British zone, 'had only been met by demands for more and he was determined not to put up with it'.[130]

By late-1919 the Syrian question was straining Anglo-French relations and was an unresolved issue which had to be concluded. Balfour pointed this out in August 1919, adding that the French had a, 'settled conviction...that British officers throughout Syria and Palestine are intriguing to make a French mandate in these regions impossible.'[131] The examination in the following chapter shows that Allenby's O.E.T.A. officers, while not typically francophile, were echoing London's view on a French administration in Damascus. Balfour was aware how the French must be feeling considering their acceptance of the loss of Mosul and

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[127]Woodward & Butler (eds), *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, vol.iv, appendix, 'Record by Derby of a conversation in Paris with Tardieu', 2 June 1919, p.1275.
[128]*Ibid.*, (*D.B.F.P.*).
[129]Derby papers, 920DER(17)28/1/2, diary 1 June 1919.
[130]Derby papers, 920DER(17)28/1/4, diary 16 Oct.1919, letter to Curzon.
[131]Kerr papers, GD40/17/39, Memo by Balfour, 'Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia', 11 Aug 1919. Copy of the same memo in Curzon papers, MssEur F112/265 but dated 9 Sept.1919.

Palestine in December 1918:-

> Suppose then we were to ask M. Clemenceau to speak his full mind in defence of the attitude of resentful suspicion adopted almost universally by his countrymen, I think he would reply somewhat in this fashion: 'In Downing Street last December [1918] I tried to arrive at an understanding with England about Syria. I was deeply conscious of the need of friendly relations between the two countries, and was most anxious to prevent any collision of interests in the Middle East. I therefore asked the Prime Minister what modifications in the Sykes-Picot Agreement England desired.'[132]

Like many within the Foreign Office, Balfour was more conscious of French sensibilities. Balfour went on to observe how Lloyd George asked for, and got, Mosul and Palestine in 1918, and how Clemenceau was surprised when he found out what he had given:-

> 'with so generous a hand was made the occasion for demanding more. Mosul, it seems, was useless unless large adjoining regions were given also. Palestine was no sufficient home for the Jews unless its frontiers were pushed northwards into Syria. And, as if that was not enough, it was discovered that Mesopotamia required a direct all-British outlet on the Mediterranean; that this involved...the possession of Palmyra [Tadmor]; so that Palmyra must follow Mosul, and be transferred from the French sphere to the British.'[133]

Arthur Balfour's comment presaged the dispute over Syria from January to November 1919. Britain had benefited from Clemenceau's willingness to compromise and over turn, 'the Quai d'Orsay's continuing attachment to the 1916 accord'.[134] But Britain had little intention of fulfilling her side of the December 1918 deal until circumstances forced her to withdraw Allenby's army of occupation. David Stevenson observes that while Britain was not seeking a Syrian mandate she, 'endeavoured' from the opening of the Paris Peace Conference on 18 January 1919, 'to exclude the French from Syria either entirely or in all but name'.[135] The evidence in the last three chapters of this thesis partly bears out this point of view. What is also brought out is the rather confused policy on which Britain embarked. This reflected the general political uncertainty in the region, and also the promises Britain had made to a number of different

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[132]Curzon papers, MssEur F112/265, report by Balfour, 'Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia', 9 Sept.1919 (also in FO406/41, p.216 dated 11 Aug 1919). Partial copy of report in E.Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914-56* (1963) pp.50-51.

[133]*Ibid.*

[134]D.Stevenson, *The First World War and International Politics* (1988) p.297

[135]*Ibid.* Stevenson also points out that Britain paid for Feisal's delegation to Paris.

parties — notably the Hashemites, the Zionists, the French, and also the Italians. It was not simply that Britain wanted to exclude France from Syria, more that Britain wanted to secure the best arrangement for herself, but it was not always apparent what was the best arrangement. One factor which did work to exclude France was the real fear of an Arab uprising if Feisal were disappointed, and this worry, articulated by Allenby in various reports, will be discussed in the next chapter. The Arabs were a double edged sword as the installing of Feisal in Damascus by Allenby gave Britain more negotiating options *vis-à-vis* France, but also complicated British diplomacy as Feisal was an ally of whom some account needed to be taken. Britain's attempt to sustain Feisal eventually became irreconcilable to good relations with France, and with the need to rationalise Britain's garrisons abroad.

It is hard not to feel some sympathy for France's position. Having signed the Sykes-Picot treaty the French discovered that Allenby's successes meant that Britain was no longer willing to stand by the 1916 treaty. Having acquiesced in this *fait accompli*, France entered into another agreement in December 1918 which Britain was again unwilling to keep. Britain's good will to Feisal was undoubtedly a complicating factor for Britain in that disregarding him could have had adverse consequences for Allenby's security, but this was not France's concern. As will be shown, Allenby and his military administrators were the targets of French criticism, but the E.E.F. was simply carrying out British policy. France knew that this was so and her targeting of the E.E.F. was an indirect way of putting pressure on Lloyd George. Allenby's army was impotent until London sorted out how important Feisal was as an ally, as compared to long-term French goodwill. The E.E.F. was left waiting on its orders on whether it was to leave Syria. Supporting Feisal's régime in Damascus was useful for Britain, but only up to a point, as was evidenced by Britain's withdrawal of the E.E.F. from Syria in November 1919.

France's relative lack of preparedness for the peace conference did little to assist her negotiating position. Unlike Britain and the United States, France arrived at the peace conference, 'without a coherent imperial peace plan. All she possessed were the individual programmes of colonialist societies and of the foreign and colonial ministries.'[136] Harold Nicolson, who attended the conference with the Foreign Office, wrote after the war how his experience, 'was that the United States delegation were the best informed; that the British delegation came a good second'.[137] The more precise assessment would be that France was the least prepared. The organisation of the American delegation was confused. The hordes of academics who accompanied President Wilson's

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[136]Andrew & Kanya-Forstner, *France Overseas*, p 165.
[137]Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919* (1945) p.22.

delegation did little to help the inexperienced Americans prepare themselves for European diplomacy.[138] The British were probably the best prepared, and they had some negotiating leeway as they did not have France's obsession on securing the Rhine frontier. This state of affairs was remarked on by Erik Goldstein who noted that when the conference ended Britain, 'emerged with almost all of its non-European desiderata. This...was due to many factors, but among them was the thorough preparation by experts of the facts, followed by discussion of the possible options in committee and the Cabinet.' [139]

By contrast, C.N. Andrew and A.S. Kanya-Forstner point to the failure of the French in the autumn of 1918 to prepare for the coming conference.[140] While the press and patriotic groups within France pushed for expansion of the French empire, with Syria being a central focus for their concerns, the, 'French were...unable to formulate a clear Middle-Eastern policy with which to approach the Peace Conference'.[141] Goldstein's article in *Middle Eastern Studies* shows how well-prepared the British were with a, 'clear set of gaols...which undoubtedly aided Britain in dominating the Eastern settlement'.[142] This meant that the French had to resort to a reactive policy of stubbornness in the face of renewed pressure from Lloyd George over the Middle East in 1919. It must have been that France believed that she had settled the Syrian question in December 1918 before the conference, and so did not need to prepare further, and thus could concentrate on the treaty with Germany. The new year was rudely to show to the French that their optimism on the Syrian settlement was misplaced.

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The decision-making process surrounding the secret December 1918 agreement is fascinating. Clemenceau and Lloyd George worked out international relations on a casual basis, and without informing anyone. When discussing the oil negotiations of this period G. Gareth Jones observes that neither premier told their foreign ministries about the December agreement and it was:-

> June 1919 before the British Foreign Office discovered its existence. Also unaware of the prime minister's arrangement, Walter Long and John Cadman had long negotiations with the French petroleum minister, Henri Bérenger, with the aim of securing an Anglo-French agreement on

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[138]Henry Wilson, the CIGS, referred to President Wilson as an 'academic ass' in his diary (Wilson papers, diaries, reel 8, 1 Feb.1919).
[139]E.Goldstein, 'British Peace Aims and the Eastern Question: The Political Intelligence Department and the Eastern Committee, 1918', *Middle Eastern Studies*, October 1987, p.434.
[140]*France Overseas*, p.165.
[141]*Ibid.*, p.178.
[142]E.Goldstein, 'British Peace Aims', *Middle Eastern Studies*, October 1987, p.419.

> petroleum matters. The resulting Long-Bérenger agreement was, however, never implemented, as Lloyd George...cancelled the agreement.[143]

This muddled situation was not surprising considering the vast range of subjects negotiated before and at the Paris Peace Conference. The Middle East was just one area to be partitioned, and with the position centre stage of the talks over Germany and reparations, the prolonging of the Middle East settlement is understandable.[144] When studying one particular area of history one must not forget all the other concerns influencing decision-makers. Not just Germany, but central and eastern Europe, and a myriad of other topics were being discussed in Paris in 1919. The strain of the Paris talks on delegates must have been immense, and sheer tiredness must have contributed to confused decision-making whose appropriateness can be pondered at leisure by historians at a later date. However, the delay to settling Syria's position was not only a result of the distraction of the German settlement, but also came from a purposeful procrastination on the part of Britain.

The rapidity with which Clemenceau and Lloyd George divided the Middle East on one rainy Sunday afternoon in December 1918 without complicated talks is most insightful. Curzon, in charge of the Foreign Office while Balfour was in Paris, complained in February 1919 of Lloyd George's relaxed way of conducting policy over the Caucasus, adding:-

> The other case was that of the new Draft Agreement in substitution for Sykes-Picot which was drawn up by Pichon in accordance with an informal agreement which was believed to have been arrived at between Clemenceau and Lloyd George. The latter had apparently said that Mosul and Palestine were all that he wanted. Clemenceau had jumped at this and Pichon had thereupon drawn up another Sykes-Picot Agreement...It was only by accident that I first heard of this Draft, and only because Montagu happened to have brought over to England a copy of it in his pocket...Meanwhile old Cambon [presumably Paul Cambon the French ambassador in London] and I were talking about the matter here in complete ignorance of what was passing at the other end.[145]

Lloyd George's idiosyncratic way of negotiating may have prolonged the settlement of the Middle East question. This assumes though that Lloyd George

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[143]G.Gareth Jones, 'The British Government and the Oil Companies 1912-24: The Search for an Oil Policy', *Historical Journal*, 20, 3, 1977, p.669.

[144]A.Lentin, *Lloyd George, Woodrow Wilson and the Guilt of Germany: An essay in the pre-history of Appeasement* (1984) provides a lucid account of the German settlement and the matter of German reparations.

[145]FO800/153, Curzon to correspondent in Paris (undoubtedly Derby), 26 Feb.1919, p.203.

was in a hurry to settle the Middle East; it is not apparent that this was so as Lloyd George's delay on implementing his arrangement with Clemenceau was purposeful, and not a consequence of simple oversight. While Lloyd George's motive for doing this was the obvious one of maintaining the British empire, he was nothing if not mercurial in achieving this end. The discussion in this chapter has centred on the December 1918 arrangement and it draws attention not only to the importance of personalities in political settlement, but the easygoing way in which profound decisions could be made. At the formal proceedings at San Remo in 1920 the December 1918 accord was made legal, and as Hankey commented in his diary on the December 1918 arrangement: 'Thus and thus is history made'.[146]

The following two chapters will look at Anglo-French political negotiations from January 1919 at the peace conference in Paris, as opposed to the preliminary discussions in London analysed in this chapter. These final two chapters will show how Lloyd George prolonged implementation of his December agreement with Clemenceau, and will make further more detailed comment on why Lloyd George wanted added adjustments to the Middle East settlement.

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[146]The San Remo talks are outlined in Woodward & Butler (eds), *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, (1952) first series, vol.viii, ch.1. The San Remo talks were a continuation of discussions in London, February-March, in *ibid.*, vol.vii, chs.1-2. Quote from Hankey papers, 1/5 diary, 11 Dec.1920.

CHAPTER SEVEN: ANGLO-FRENCH NEGOTIATIONS AT THE PEACE CONFERENCE, JANUARY 1919 TO THE KING-CRANE COMMISSION.

> Clemenceau was always quizzing Wilson about his 14 points and having sly digs. He [Clemenceau] was asked by a friend how he got on, after the withdrawal of Orlando, on the Council of Three. He replied 'I sit between two lunatics. One imagines himself Jesus Christ, and the other Napoleon.' (From Hankey papers, 1/5 diary, 2 July 1919.)

Having established Britain's priorities in the Middle East at the war's end in the previous chapter, this chapter will elaborate on these concerns, and will examine the negotiations between Britain and France to the summer of 1919. From January to May 1919 Lloyd George tried to expand British controlled territory in the Middle East at France's expense, beyond the changes agreed in December 1918. This attempt to coerce France was ultimately futile, but led to abrupt exchanges between Clemenceau and Lloyd George. Not only is it necessary to examine how and why Britain hoped to alter Syria's boundary, but also to assess the value of Britain's efforts to exclude France from Syria. Considering his central position in the Middle East, Allenby's part in these events needs some clarification.

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On 14 July 1919 the French celebrated Bastille Day with a victory parade through Paris. The crowds waited until:-

> a captain took out his watch and gave the order heard at so many lethal dawns during the preceding four years: *Avancez*! The drums rolled, the trumpets sounded out their fanfares...and approaching the Arc de Triomphe was soon heard the music of the regimental bands playing out the stirring strains of *Vous n'aurez pas l'Alsace et la Lorraine*...what memories were passing through the minds of the troops as they marched by the statue of Strasbourg in the Concorde, now disburdened of its mourning crêpe for the first summer since 1870! For in all French hearts this *Quatorze Juillet* was a day of destiny.[1]

Leading the procession were the *mutilés de guerre*, some in wheelchairs, some horribly disfigured (the *gueules cassés* — 'smashed faces'). While France was not unique in having had enormous losses in the war, the scale of her casualties was remarkable, and probably only Serbia lost more as a proportion of forces

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[1] A.Horne, *To Lose A Battle: France 1940* (1969) pp.5, 9.

mobilised.[2] The bulk of four years' fighting on the Western Front had been on French soil, and France's concerns at the war's end were reparations and guarantees against any renewed German aggression.

Syria's importance to France should be measured against the loss of Alsace-Lorraine in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. The human and material destruction for France resulting from the First World War, coupled with the continued perception of Germany as a threat, meant that the focus of French strategic thinking was on the Rhenish frontier where France faced Germany. Emphasising Syria's relative importance to France, Lord Derby, the ambassador to France, recorded in his diary for February 1919 that, 'Clemenceau did not really care a rap about Syria...his whole mind was concentrated on the valley of the Saare and the Buffer State between France and Germany'.[3] On the 4 October 1918 Lord Esher wrote to Maurice Hankey that France's war aims were: 'First, a long way before every other consideration...payment of war expenses. Then, a good second, Alsace and L[orraine]. Beyond that everything is subsidiary, although they are jealous of Syria.'[4] The discussion in the previous chapter showed how Clemenceau received assurances over the Rhine frontier in return for giving over Mosul and Palestine. Clemenceau's willingness to come to an arrangement in December 1918 demonstrated that he was ready to make concessions in return for security for *la patrie*. Agreeing to give up Mosul and Palestine was a substantial adjustment, and one resulting from France's attitude toward domestic defence.

However, Clemenceau did not agree to give up Syria itself, and it would be wrong to suggest that France was indifferent about Syria. While Clemenceau was not unduly stirred by Syria, French popular opinion, and commercial interests based round the silk industry, were for involvement in the Levant, an area where France had long historical ties. The more so as France, 'lamented the loss of India...By the end of the [nineteenth] century, Syria had become the main focus of French activity...there were no French Lawrences, Sykeses or Bells. But there were determined imperialists like Étienne Flandin and Franklin-Bouillon.'[5] There were many in France, as was evidenced by the French press campaign in 1919, willing to urge Britain to withdraw the E.E.F.s army of occupation. Syria was considered by France to be her, 'own Orient, the site of French political,

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[2]*The Times Atlas of World History* (1979) table 1, p.252. Britain mobilised 12.5 % of its men, Germany 15.4%, France almost 17% (from E Hobsbawn, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (1994) p.44).

[3]Derby papers, 920DER(17)28/1/2, diary 16 Feb.1919.

[4]Hankey papers, 4/10, Esher to Hankey, 4 Oct.1918. In *ibid.*, diary, 1/4, 28 Nov.1917, Hankey noted that Clemenceau would accept a French Syria as it would 'please some reactionaries'.

[5]E.Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (Penguin 1991) pp.224-5.

moral, and economic interests'.[6] It was natural for France to seek some colonial compensation for her war-effort above and beyond security *vis-à-vis* Germany. To have accepted only the Lebanese littoral for the sacrifice on the Western Front would have been an affront to French pride. It is worthwhile remembering that France had been 'shattered' by the war, and thus it was, 'all the more important that France should not adopt the psychology of a defeated nation'.[7] France's leaders were willing to make concessions over Syria, but only up to a point. In June 1919, when an impasse had been reached in Anglo-French negotiations over Syria, Derby spoke to André Tardieu and recorded in his diary how, 'although Clemenceau does not really care much about Syria and Tardieu himself is evidently anti-colonial it has now become a question of amour propre and nothing will induce Clemenceau to give way'.[8] Having spoken to Stephen Pichon, the French Foreign Secretary, Derby noted how the French did not think England 'understood the sentimental value...that the French put upon Syria', which was 'far above' its strategic value.[9] Derby wrote to Balfour how Tardieu believed that the Syrian question would be easily solved, but Britain had to be careful not to, 'make too big a man of the Emir Feisal'.[10]

Britain's concern was that France might be a threat if she were allowed to control Syria. In the long term this may have had some basis in fact, but in the years immediately following the First World War Britain had an exaggerated fear of the French menace. Britain did not realise the emotional element in the French attachment to Syria, and she disregarded the fact that France desired control of Syria more for domestic political reasons than for any hostile designs on the British empire. Valentine Chirol, with the British delegation in Paris, remembered how the impression he formed was that Clemenceau, 'was not personally very keen about the Syrian question', and that French security was Clemenceau's 'one overwhelming preoccupation'.[11] Chirol's own feelings were that Clemenceau was aware of how the Syrian dispute could adversely affect Anglo-French relations, and Chirol noted how French pride and fear of Germany contrasted with the more objective calculations of the British in the Middle East:-

> 'If only', he [Clemenceau] once abruptly exclaimed, 'there were a few more Englishmen now in Paris who had seen the *Boches* march in here as you [Chirol] and I did in 1871. But', turning then almost fiercely upon

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[6]*Ibid.*, p.225.
[7]D.R.Watson, *Georges Clemenceau: A Political Biography* (1974) p 371.
[8]Derby papers, 920DER(17)28/1/2, diary 1 June 1919.
[9]Derby papers, 920DER(17)28/1/4, diary, 9 July 1919.
[10]Balfour papers, Add.Mss.49744, Derby to Balfour, 2 Mar.1919. See *ibid.* diary 17 Mar.& 9 Apr. 1919 also.
[11]Chirol, *Fifty Years in a Changing World* (1927), p.331.

me, 'you are like the rest, and the only thing you want to talk about is Syria'.[12]

In Paris on the 30 January 1919 Lloyd George and Clemenceau discussed revision of the Sykes-Picot agreement.[13] Subsequent to these talks the French produced a memorandum on 15 February 1919 by which France conceded Mosul and Palestine.[14] Harry N. Howard's footnote reference for the 15 February memorandum points out that it has not been published.[15] Both R.S. Baker and the relevant *Foreign Relations of the United States* volume describe the . memorandum and show that Clemenceau was keeping to his side of the December 1918 accord.[16] The date for the memorandum is, however, a little unclear. Lloyd George indicates that 5 February was when he received the memorandum, and a document in Lord Milner's papers at the Public Record Office (Kew, London) could be the memorandum.[17] The map in PRO30/30/10 with the French note has 5 February as the date of France's memorandum on Syria.[18]

While the ten day discrepancy was not crucial, Syria's administration and borders were, as France, 'wanted the entire Syrian region treated as one under the mandatory of France'.[19] For France the reduced Syria was to be one that she could rule as the Sykes-Picot agreement had envisaged, with France left alone to, 'supply advisers or foreign functionaries at the request of the Arab State'.[20] With economic advisers and control of Syrian foreign policy France would be in a situation akin to Britain's in Egypt. Milner pointed out to Lloyd George that what France was, 'looking for, despite their own Sykes-Picot agreement, is the virtual ownership of Syria'.[21] France's aim, of course, was no different from that of Britain's in Palestine and Mesopotamia. While notions of self-determination may have tempered some of the more direct forms of colonial control of the

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[12] *Ibid.*

[13] H.W.V.Temperley, *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris* (1924) vol.vi, p.142.

[14] H N.Howard, *The Partition of Turkey: A Diplomatic History 1913-23* (1966) p 211.

[15] *Ibid.*, ft.79, p.211 (Howard's information from Baker, vol.iii).

[16] Baker, *Woodrow Wilson & World Settlement* (1923) vol.iii, pp.3-6 and *FRUS: The Paris Peace Conference 1919* (1944) vol.v (*FRUS* version in J.Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near & Middle East: A Documentary Record* (1956) p.52).

[17] Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference* (1939) vol.ii, p.685 & PRO30/30/10 (Milner papers), 'English Translation of the French Draft of a Proposed new Anglo-French Agreement on Syria' (n.d.). See FO608/84/344/3/1, p.324 for confirmation of 5 Feb 1919 date

[18] The map with the memo 'Seat of War in Turkey' has key: 'Sphere of influence with which France might be satisfied under the conditions indicated in the note of 5.2 19 ' There is a further copy of the 5 Feb. memo in FO371/4354 with a FO note on it dated 6 Feb.1919.

[19] Howard, *Partition of Turkey*, p.228.

[20] Tripartite (Sykes-Picot) Agreement for the Partition of the Ottoman Empire: Britain, France and Russia, 26 Apr.-23 Oct 1916 in Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Middle East*, p.19.

[21] Lloyd George papers, F/39/1/10, Milner to PM, 8 Mar.1919, p.4.

nineteenth-century, the Sykes-Picot agreement, with its plan for France and Britain to 'protect' nascent Arab governments, had the aim of establishing French and British rule in the Middle East. France was willing to, 'accept at Damascus a regime approximate to that laid down for zone A in 1916'.[22] As the French pointed out in their note of 5 February: 'Since we are fated to see our influence disappear from a great part of the countries which made up the Ottoman Empire we must consolidate it in Syria'.[23] France's view was that she had a valid and long-standing interest in Lebanon and Syria stretching back to the thirteenth-century crusades of Louis IX. More recently, in 1860, France had despatched an expedition to Lebanon to protect the Maronite Christians of Mount Lebanon, and as Barbara Tuchman notes: 'the prestige that France had gained by coming to the rescue of the Christian community gave the French a foothold in Syria that lasted down to the French mandates of our time'.[24]

Beyond Syria there was the unresolved question of France's share of Mosul's oil fields. In January 1919 negotiations had begun on this matter and this culminated in Walter Long and Senator Bérenger initialing the Long-Bérenger oil agreement on 8 April 1919 that allowed France a share of Mesopotamia's oil.[25]

Anglo-French negotiations followed the agreement of December 1918 until Britain received the French proposal of 15 February 1919. On receipt of the memorandum Britain replied with a scheme that, 'provided for a great limitation of the territory to come under French influence, both on the east and the south as regards the Jebel Druze'.[26] This desire to move Palestine's border north, and Mesopotamia's west to include oasis towns like Deir-es-Zor and Tadmor in the British zone, came from Britain's assessment of her imperial requirements. Boundary allocation, delimitation and demarcation were — and still are — time consuming, but colonial powers were usually able to allocate conquered territory quite rapidly when it was not of vital strategic value. The difficulty over Syria was that her boundaries were seen to be of great significance for Britain, and with a British army of occupation garrisoned in Syria, France's ability to resist Britain was diminished. France's weak position was not helped by an anarchist gunman shooting Clemenceau three times on 19 February 1919; one of the bullets lodged near his lung causing him great pain, and the discomfort for Clemenceau was an added distraction. Considering Clemenceau's age his

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[22]PRO30/30/10 (Milner papers), 'English Translation of the French Draft of a Proposed new Anglo-French Agreement on Syria' (n.d.).
[23]*Ibid.*
[24]B.Tuchman, *Bible and Sword: How the British came to Palestine* (1982) p.257.
[25]See E.L.Woodward & R.Butler (eds), *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, first series, (1952) vol.iv, ch.iv & p.1093. Also A.Wilson, *Mesopotamia 1917-20: A Clash of Loyalties* (1931) p 125.
[26]Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Middle East*, p 53.

recovery was remarkable, but his condition can have done little to help him in his negotiations with Lloyd George.[27]

Georges Clemenceau needed all his wits about him so as to influence Lloyd George to agree to the French memorandum of February 1919. Britain's unwillingness to accept the French memorandum stemmed from the fact that the line, 'proposed by M. Pichon on February 5th in modification of the Sykes-Picot line...its only difference from the Sykes-Picot line is that it takes into account the cession of the Mosul area to the Prime Minister by M. Clemenceau last December'.[28] For British imperial security the northern Palestine border as it extended east through the Yarmuk Valley-Jebel Hauran area and into the Syrian desert needed to be modified by being pushed north and west. In Palestine a statement of British policy on 18 February 1919 indicated a northern border of the River Litani, well inside present-day Lebanon.[29] Later in 1919 the Foreign Office minuted on a memorandum by the Haifa military governor on Palestine's northern boundary: 'Both the War Office for strategic reasons and this section for...better reasons based on the necessity of developing Palestine as much as possible economically if the Zionist case is to made practically successful, still hope that the Litani may be made the northern frontier of Palestine.'[30] Palestine was seen to be essential for the defence of Egypt and the Suez Canal. In a conference with Lloyd George and Allenby present in September 1919, the extension of Palestine to the foot of Mount Hermon was seen to be vital for Palestine's defence and economic viability.[31] The springs at the foot of Mount Hermon were particularly important to help agriculture flourish in Palestine as the region was typically desiccated. When the December 1918 deal was agreed, Hankey remembered how Lloyd George made an informal arrangement with Philippe Berthelot on Palestine's Galilee border. Hankey could not get close enough to the discussion to discover what was said but he did manage to instruct Robert Vansittart to tell Berthelot that France should, 'treat the requirements of Palestine for water in the most favourable spirit'.[32]

Britain's wish 'to limit the French zone in Syria on the east and south involving the Jebel Druze' forced Clemenceau to adopt an intransigent attitude.[33]

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[27]For assassination attempt see Lloyd George papers, F/51/1/10, telephone message from Paris, 20 Feb.1919 & F/52/3/6, Derby to LG, 21 Feb.1919.

[28]FO608/84/344/3/1, Caucasia, 'Boundaries of Arab Countries', by Forbes Adam, 9 Aug.1919, p.324.

[29]PRO30/30/10, 'Statement of British Policy for Submission to the Peace Conference', by British Delegation, Paris, 18 Feb.1919, p.14.

[30]FO608/84/344/3/1, Caucasia, minute by FO on memo by Stanton at Haifa (Oct.1919), minute dated 1 Nov.1919.

[31]CAB21/153, 'Future of Syria part 1', notes of meeting at PMs house, 10 Sept.1919.

[32]Hankey papers, 1/5 diary, 11 Dec.1920.

[33]Howard, *Partition of Turkey*, p 228.

Clemenceau would have been unable to defend a lost or severely truncated Syria in the French parliament, as Stephen Pichon pointed out:-

> It would be absolutely indefensible in the Chamber. It was enough for the Chamber to know that the Government were in negotiation with Great Britain for the handing over of Mosul...the minimum that France could accept was what had been put forward in the French Government's Note [15 February 1919] to Mr Lloyd George, the object of which had been to give satisfaction to his desire for the inclusion of Mosul in the British zone.[34]

Had Lloyd George heeded this comment by Pichon much Anglo-French friction could have been avoided; General Allenby and his administration would not have been the target of French accusations that they were biased in favour of Feisal; Britain could have concluded a Middle East settlement similar to the autumn 1919 arrangement six months earlier.

It was the potential 'corridor' connecting Palestine and Mesopotamia extending up from the Yarmuk valley that was Britain's main concern, as Milner observed to the Prime Minister when describing a conversation he had just had with Clemenceau: 'Our interest was confined to an extended Mesopotamia, to Palestine, and to a good connection between them'.[35] There was an existing railway line connecting Deraa to Palestine that twisted along the Yarmuk River, and if this railway were included in a French Syria then Britain would have to build a new line across the desert to Tadmor. Robert Vansittart wrote to Gilbert Clayton in 1920 how it had, 'proved impossible to induce the French Government to cede to us the Yarmuk Valley' as France did not see, 'why they should renounce the advantage unfortunately accorded to them by the Sykes-Picot Agreement'.[36] Had Britain secured the Hauran area this railway could have provided the basis for a railway link with Mesopotamia, especially as the increasing depth of the Jordan Valley to the south of Lake Tiberias made a rail link very difficult. To secure the route from Palestine to Mesopotamia, 'the P.M. had decided to stake out a claim by occupying Tadmor'.[37] Allenby was quick to point out that such an occupation would have, 'no military justification and would be viewed with suspicion by French'.[38] For any possible railway or pipeline across the desert Tadmor was seen to be vital, and, 'the Prime Minister attached great importance to the railway connecting Palestine and Mesopotamia being in a

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[34]Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Middle East*, p.53.
[35]Lloyd George papers, F/39/1/10, Milner to LG, 8 Mar.1919, p.1.
[36]Clayton papers, 694/1/9-11, Vansittart to Curzon, 27 July 1920.
[37]Lloyd George papers, F/47/8/24, 'Tadmur', by Lt Col Gribbon, 23 June 1919, p.3.
[38]*Ibid.*

British sphere'.[39] It is worth considering how much the occupation of Tadmor was a particular inclination of Lloyd George's. Curzon wrote to Balfour that the, 'Prime Minister attached an importance, which I should be inclined to think excessive, to the necessity of having a railway and a pipeline line exclusively in British hands from Mesopotamia to a Mediterranean port'.[40]

Leopold Amery, with his acute focus on British imperial security, agreed with Lloyd George's assessment on the value of Tadmor, arguing that, 'the possibility of strategic railway and air connection between Egypt and Mesopotamia is a matter of vital importance, not only for the security of both these countries but for the whole of that southern half of the British Empire which extends from Cape Town through Cairo and Calcutta, Sydney and Wellington'.[41] Amery was close to the Prime Minister, and his global scheme must have influenced Lloyd George's calculations. In March 1918 Amery had written to Jan Smuts about his concern for imperial communications, pointing out that Britain, 'as such wanted nothing but that all our demands would be the outcome of the necessary insistence of the Dominions and of India and Egypt for security, a security which postulated free inter-communication between the different parts of the British Empire'.[42] Amery felt that the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France was sufficient as she, 'is to get Alsace Lorraine, which in present value is much more than any colonial territory'.[43]

The evidence available indicates that the above reports affected Lloyd George. His secretary, J.T. Davies, wrote to Curzon in July 1919 that Lloyd George, 'was against entering into any arrangements about oil with the French until we have first of all determined the boundaries. The proposed agreement [on oil] seemed to him to place us entirely in the hands of the French and unless we have direct access to the Mediterranean that will always be the case.'[44] Philip Kerr, another of the Prime Minister's secretaries, reinforces Davies' comment in notes he made later in 1919 on a conversation Kerr had had with Clemenceau: 'I said that I knew the Prime Minister attached great importance to the railway connecting Palestine and Mesopotamia being in a British sphere'.[45] Clemenceau was aware that the British were, 'proposing to detach large areas from the French

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[39]Lloyd George papers, F/51/1/40, unsigned note of 11 Sept.1919.
[40]Balfour papers, Add.Mss.49734, Curzon to Balfour, 20 Aug.1919.
[41]Balfour papers, Add.Mss 49775, memo by Amery 'United States and British War Aims', 15 Aug.1919.
[42]W.K.Hancock & J.van der Poel (eds), *Selections from the Smuts Papers* (1966) vol.iii, p.626 (Amery to Smuts, 27 Mar.1918).
[43]Quoted in E.Kedourie's book review of Hancock & Poel, *Selections from Smuts Papers* in *Middle Eastern Studies*, October 1967, p.114.
[44] Woodward & Butler (eds), *D.B.F.P.*, first series, vol.iv, Davies to Curzon, 11 July 1919, p.1100; copy in L/P&S/10/555 file 2249.
[45]Kerr papers, GD40/17/1339-1342, notes by Kerr on talk with Clemenceau, 10 Sept.1919. See also Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, vol.ii, p.678.

protectorate in Syria to provide for a railway line from Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean'.[46]

The First World War had seen rapid advances in the use of aeroplanes, and improved machines, and the realisation that air power was going to play an increasing role for national and imperial security reinforced the need for communications across Arabia to link up the British empire. These strategies involving air power must have complicated an already intricate situation as the Middle East question: 'involved not just the Foreign and Colonial Offices but also the India Office, the War Office and the Admiralty. In addition, the development of air communications between Egypt and India...brought the Air Ministry into the debate'.[47] In this involved, maybe even confused, situation the reports reaching Lloyd George stressed that for secure air communications across the Syrian desert Tadmor was particularly important. It was the only place:-

> with wells in the Syrian desert between Mesopotamia and Syria and Palestine...all roads and towns in the Euphrates crossing the desert towards Syria converge there; it might therefore be used to carry a railway and a pipeline across the desert from Mesopotamia to Palestine; it might also form a useful landing ground for aeroplanes.[48]

Contemporary supersonic long-distance air travel should not obscure the primitive nature of flying just after the First World War, and the character of flight in 1919 needs to be taken into account as, 'aircraft of the time certainly needed bases in the desert. Engines were unreliable, and the range of most machines was very limited.'[49] When Britain did finally set up an air route from Palestine to Mesopotamia, pilots visually followed a ploughed line that had been furrowed out in the desert below them. In this pioneering situation wanting to have regular and established air bases is more understandable. The need for aerodromes linked to the desire for a railway from the Mediterranean to Mesopotamia and served to focus Britain's strategic thinking on the Syrian desert in 1919. When an air route was established in the 1920s the British opted for a route across Arabia via Trans-Jordan and the Rutbah wells in western Iraq and avoided Tadmor to the north. However, the viability of this route depended on Abdullah's friendly régime in Amman which was established following his invasion of Trans-Jordan in 1920 and then the Cairo Conference in 1921 where Abdullah was made the ruler of Trans-Jordan.

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[46]D.R.Watson, *Georges Clemenceau: A Political Biography* (1974) p.370.
[47]P.J.Beck, '"A Tedious & Perilous Controversy": Britain and the Settlement of the Mosul Dispute, 1918-1926', *Middle Eastern Studies*, April 1981, p.257.
[48]FO608/84/344/3/1, 'Boundaries of Arab Countries', by Forbes Adam, 9 Aug.1919, p.325.
[49]Personal correspondence to author from Dr David Omissi at University of Hull, 19 June 1995.

In 1919 the possibility of building a link via Trans-Jordan and thus avoiding Syria was not apparent, and in seemed in 1919 that even Damascus might be essential for workable imperial communications Maj -Gen F H. Sykes, with the British delegation in Paris, having spoken to Geoffrey Salmond, future Air Vice-Marshal of the Royal Air Force and the senior R.A.F. officer in the Middle East in 1918, observed that, 'the Mandatory Power at Damascus might be in a position to exclude us from all the great advantages which its possession would ensue to the All British air route to the East'.[50] Sykes passed on to Milner a letter from Salmond where the case was put with more vigour: 'You have asked me for my views as to the value of Damascus as a station on the Egypt, Mesopotamia, India air route. In my view it is a very important station and is almost essential if we are to derive all the advantages of this route.' Salmond added how if Damascus were, 'excluded from the British Mandatory Power the French will start a rival route to the East and will be at once in a position to seriously compete with our air route to India and Mesopotamia with all the resultant political advantages'. Salmond's apprehensive report concluded by noting that if Damascus were, 'excluded from the British Mandatory Power we shall have a foreign power athwart our principal "All British" air route to the East at a most important point'.[51] Realistically, Britain stood little chance of establishing herself in Damascus as she had always said that she was not looking to secure Syria as a British colony. However, reports such as those from Salmond cannot have made Lloyd George eager to compromise on territorial adjustments in the Middle East.

If Damascus could not be in a British zone then France was to be forced to accept a border for her zone that would have run, 'just south of Sidon', with 'the line across the desert so as to include Tadmor' in Britain's zone.[52] Even if air power is ignored, the 'Fertile Crescent', stretching from Palestine round to the head of the Persian Gulf, was an area of great importance; an historic cross-roads where armies had for many millennia clashed, and the events of the Second World War, with the invasion of Vichy Syria, and the suppression of Rashid Ali's pro-Axis revolt in Iraq, emphasise the strategic significance of Syria and Mesopotamia. (And if the revelation of St. John the Divine is to be believed, Armageddon and the end of the world will also come about in this region.[53])

Discussing the Baghdad railway in a meeting in February 1919 the British General Staff representatives wanted to secure a, 'practicable military route between Baghdad and the Mediterranean...Strategically, it is desirable that

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[50]PRO30/30/10, letter F.H.Sykes to Milner, encl. letter Salmond to Sykes, 8 Feb.1919. The 'might be' in this quote replaces a crossed out 'is'.
[51]PRO30/30/10, letter Salmond to F.H.Sykes, 8 Feb.1919 (all Salmond's quotes from letter).
[52]FO608/84/344/3/1, 'Boundaries of Arab Countries', by Forbes Adam, 9 Aug.1919, p.325.
[53]Revelation xvi.16-21.

such a route should be as far distant from the frontier as may be practicable. Technical considerations point to the necessity of the route passing through the oasis of Tadmor.'[54] As Lt.-Col. Gribbon noted in a memorandum in Lloyd George's papers: 'we must have the place [Tadmor] if we are to maintain any direct communication between Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean'.[55]

The analysis in this chapter shows that the desire to extend Mesopotamia's boundary was impractical as France was unwilling to accept the change, and France had only to wait until British domestic pressures forced her to withdraw Allenby's army of occupation. The situation was such that working with, as opposed to against, the French was the best option. However, the reports to Lloyd George in early-1919 were not so conciliatory. In February 1919 at a meeting chaired by Lord Hardinge to discuss the Baghdad railway the conclusion was that: 'British interests cannot therefore be adequately safeguarded on the left flank of India unless the entire frontier of the territory under British control is pushed northward considerably beyond anything contemplated in the Sykes-Picot Agreement'.[56]

Britain's hope that France would accept a diminished Syria was misplaced, and shows a degree of confusion on the part of the War Cabinet in London. Did strategists such as the air expert Salmond really believe that France would agree to a British aerodrome at Damascus? Indeed, did Britain really want to add Damascus and its environs to her proposed mandated area? Lloyd George had assured the French in April 1919 that 'even if they went down on bended knees' Britain would refuse the mandate for Syria.[57] Presumably the plan was that a friendly Arab régime, akin to the one which would be set up in Iraq, would allow Britain special rights. Papers in the relevant Foreign Office files at the Public Record Office at Kew outline Britain's somewhat confused view on Syria.[58] British planners seemed to be aware that France was not going to compromise further, but were still optimistic that somehow, somewhere, a solution favourable for British imperial communications could be found. Britain wanted to have increased control in the Middle East far beyond that which was achievable. France was determined to have Syria as a colony, and Britain could have saved her energies for more fruitful political avenues if she had made herself aware of France's unwillingness and inability to make added concessions.

In this fraught situation reports from those such as Colonel Gribbon in Paris summarised the worst case situation with France able to deny British access

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[54]FO608/102/378/1/1, 'The Future of the Baghdad Railway', 15 Feb 1919 in paper 26 Feb.1919.
[55]Lloyd George papers, F/47/8/24, 'Tadmur' by Gribbon, 23 June 1919, p.2.
[56]FO608/102/378/1/1, 'The Future of the Baghdad Railway', meeting, 15 Feb.1919, outlined on 26 Feb.1919, p.46.
[57]Balfour papers, Add Mss.49744, diary entry by Derby, 9 April 1919.
[58]For instance FO608/84-102.

to Mesopotamia: 'it is obvious that we must have the place [Tadmor]... the French could only use the place as a strategic threat to us...Just as Tadmur is essential as a link between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean, the Yarmuk railway is essential as a link between Palestine and the Hejaz.'[59] The depth of the Jordan Valley obstructed any lateral railway from Palestine to Britain's possessions farther east. The Yarmuk railway was the obvious choice for any power wanting to secure communications across Arabia. To secure the Yarmuk railway required that Britain included the Hauran area of Syria and also Tadmor in her zone.

The Royal Air Force only added to the sense of alarm and confirmed the worst case scenario of an expansionist France straddling the communications of the Middle East. Ignoring the simple pride element in France's wish to receive colonial compensation for her sacrifices of 1914-18, the R.A.F. reported in papers such as 'Strategic advantages for the R.A.F of the proposed frontier south of Damascus' how the pre-war Egyptian border was not satisfactory for defence of the Suez Canal, and how: 'The provision of an aerodrome in the vicinity of Damascus is a most important consideration in order to enable us to form our strategic air route from Egypt...to India to Australia'. The air power specialists continued by arguing that not only strategically, but for the civil and commercial viability of the air route, bases would be needed in Syria.[60]

Henry Wilson, as C.I.G.S., reported to the D.M.O. in May 1919 how in view of the impasse on Syria's eastern border: 'the Prime Minister has decided to jump our claim and to tentatively occupy Palmyra'.[61] Clemenceau was furious with Lloyd George's actions. Henry Wilson, a francophone who was friendly with Clemenceau, told one British officer at Paris how: 'There is however...one real snag—and that is Clemenceau's attitude re Tadmur. He says that C.[lemenceau] who is normally very fond of him (H.W.) simply won't let him finish his sentences when he starts talking about it.'[62] Clemenceau's anger was a reflection of France's growing irritation at Britain's uncompromising attitude.

The military commanders in Palestine and Mesopotamia pointed out the impracticability of the proposals to occupy isolated oases in the Syrian Desert. George Macmunn, the military commander in Mesopotamia, remarked in his post-war reminiscences how he found, 'distant outposts, put out for political reasons, but hostages to fortune...The worst of these was Deir-es-Zor...whose original raison d'être was to...give the British a free hand in settling the Damascus states frontier.'[63] Allenby was equally sceptical about the feasibility of

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[59]F0608/96/371/1/6, 'Boundary between French & British Spheres in Middle East', by Gribbon, 12 June 1919.
[60]FO608/96/371/1/6, by Brig Gen Air Section, 14 June 1919, p.455.
[61]WO106/191, Wilson to DMO, 21 May 1919.
[62]WO106/194, Col Gribbon to WO, 15 June 1919.
[63]Macmunn, *Behind the Scenes in Many Wars* (1930) pp.277-78.

occupying isolated settlements to help the politicians in London. In May 1919 Allenby cabled London how he, 'doubted whether it would be practicable to feed a force at Tadmur with his existing transport'.[64] Allenby was doubtful of the wisdom of coercing the French: 'As Commander-in-Chief...I have always been careful not to use troops for political purposes'.[65] Since June 1917 Allenby had been ordered to carry out certain political tasks — most notably at the fall of Damascus — during the E.E.F.s campaign, but it was obvious that he was uncomfortable with his role. Allenby's unease was a result of his having to deal with any unpleasant, and possibly violent, consequences of political decisions made in Paris for the peoples of the region. As the commander on the ground Allenby sent reports to London outlining the difficulties inherent in Britain's intricate policy towards Syria. The accuracy of Allenby's assessments was borne out by the eventual settlement at San Remo that left Tadmor and Deir-es-Zor in French Syria, for as Allenby observed: 'I would point out that there is no practicable route from Palestine...to Palmyra without passing through what will be French sphere'.[66] Allenby's reports must also be considered in light of the unstable position in the lands to the north of Syria. Unrest in eastern Anatolia spilled over into Allenby's zone of occupation making him more apprehensive. The Turkish presence in Cilicia produced intrigue and exacerbated tensions which resulted in the British garrison in northern Syria having to contend with renewed massacres of Armenian refugees.[67]

It is interesting how the politicians such as Lloyd George frequently saw military solutions to political problems, while military commanders looked to politics for their military dilemmas. It was as though both the politicians and the generals were very much aware of the limitations of their own professions, and looked outside their vocations for answers. Allenby's estimation was accurate in pointing out how, politically desirable as Tadmor's occupation might be, Britain had definite military limits to what she could achieve.

Arthur Hirtzel, secretary of the political department at the India Office, produced a memorandum on 14 February 1919 dealing with France's claims in Syria, and Hirtzel encapsulated British machinations over the whole Syrian question. Hirtzel's memorandum presaged what would happen in late-1919 when Britain was forced to accept the relative importance of France, as compared to Feisal, and withdraw her Syrian garrison. The attempt to extend Britain's commitment in Syria ignored the geographical impossibilities of garrisoning the Syrian Desert, and Hirtzel's view was that: 'I have all along urged that we should

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[64]Lloyd George papers, F/47/8/24, 'Tadmur', by Lt Col Gribbon, 23 June 1919, p.3.
[65]WO33/981, Allenby to WO, 29 May 1919, p.43.
[66]WO106/192, Allenby to WO, 29 May 1919 (same telegram as in WO33/981).
[67]For evidence of this see Clayton papers, 473/3/7-11, Clayton to Wavell, 22 Mar.1919.

not carry support of Arab claims to a point that would involve us in a conflict with France'. Hirtzel added how:-

> After the war, as before it, we shall have to live next door to the French all over the world. They may not be pleasant neighbours...but there it is; and it is quite conceivable that the U.S.A. may withdraw into their shell again, leaving us to bear the odium of disappointed hopes. More than that, we shall need French friendship and support.[68]

Arthur Hirtzel was frank about the reasons for his pessimism regarding Britain's Middle East policy: 'I may be thought to write with a parti pris because the India Office have disliked the Arab policy of H.M.G...We disliked it because we thought it would raise greater difficulties than it would solve...To that much-abused instrument [Sykes-Picot] the India Office was a reluctantly-consenting party.' Assessing Feisal's political claims Hirtzel pointed out that:-

> Without the British offensive there would have been no effective Arab revolt; and without the Sykes-Picot Agreement there would have been no British offensive. And here I would remark that, instead of indulging in cheap sarcasms about the two old guns which the French lent him, Feisal would do well to remember that France made her contribution to the Arab revolt at Verdun. If the French had failed there, Feisal, if still alive, would probably be a loyal Turkish subject now.[69]

This assessment was a reflection of the India Office's long-standing suspicion of the Arab policy emanating from Cairo: 'But how should we feel if the positions were reversed — if the French were in military occupation of Mesopotamia; if the Naqib of Baghdad were smuggled home without our knowledge to plead for independence and a united Arabia under French auspices'. Hirtzel's concern for France's position was not so much a result of altruism on his part, as the view that Britain's position in the Middle East would be best secured through direct rule, and not by Cairo's policy of encouraging Arab self-determination. T.E. Lawrence was seen by Hirtzel to represent the unfair means by which Britain dealt with France and Hirtzel wondered how Britain would feel if the Naqib's, 'mouthpiece were a French military officer, attached to the French Foreign Office, and daily running to and fro between French and American headquarters to ensure the defeat of British aspirations?'[70]

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[68]PRO30/30/10, 'The French Claims in Syria', by Hirtzel, 14 Feb.1919 (the French memorandum Hirtzel refers to seems to be dated 31 Jan.1919). The following quotes of Hirtzel's are all from this memorandum.

[69]PRO30/30/10, 'The French Claims in Syria', by Hirtzel, 14 Feb.1919.

[70]*Ibid.*, p.5.

The views embodied in Hirtzel's memorandum should not obscure the fact that Hirtzel's aims were very similar to Lloyd George's: Hirtzel wanted modification of Syria's border and only 25 per cent. (and not 50 per cent.) of Mosul's oil to go to France.[71] It was the means whereby this would be achieved that Hirtzel disagreed, as he wanted Britain to drop her support for Feisal and tell him: 'that he must come to terms with the French'.[72] Hirtzel's comments have been quoted at some length as his conclusions are perceptive in recognising the difficult position that Britain faced. That Hirtzel was in a minority in the government is attested to by a letter from Milner to Lloyd George where Milner said that while he was, 'totally opposed to the idea of trying to diddle the French out of Syria', he was aware that he had, 'almost every other Government authority military and diplomatic against me'.[73] While the Mesopotamian administration, fearful of Arab rule in neighbouring Syria, argued against supporting Feisal, the balance of British opinion in early-1919 seems to have been in favour of continued support for the Hashemites.

For Hirtzel the French were, 'in a weak position, and I believe they would be glad to make terms'.[74] The French were, indeed, in a poor negotiating position, but Britain was to discover during 1919 that she too had domestic popular opinion and fiscal constraints which restricted her garrisons abroad, and which limited her ability to remain indefinitely in far-flung lands occupied at the war's end. When Clemenceau visited London in December 1918 Britain's power to influence France was at its peak, and as 1919 progressed Britain's power to impress progressively diminished. The obvious conclusion is that Britain should have realised that little more than wasted effort would come from trying to coerce the French further. This thesis has argued that France was in a weak position in the Middle East, not least because of Allenby's success at the battle of Megiddo, and Britain's support for Prince Feisal. But in the last resort French stubbornness and her position as an ally gave France an edge which, coupled with Britain's need to demobilise and retrench, allowed her some power to resist attempts to reduce or deny Syria to France.

Lloyd George's stubbornness over Syria was excessive and disregarded the inherent difficulties of his stance. As Forbes Adam of the Foreign Office pointed out when reviewing the Syrian negotiations of 1919: 'The roads which converge from Mesopotamia at Tadmur all run afterwards...into Damascus... Above all it seems unwise to base policy in this part of the world on the danger of a future war between France and Great Britain.'[75] The analysis in Chapter Six

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[71]PRO30/30/10, 'The French Claims in Syria', by Hirtzel, 14 Feb.1919, p.6.
[72]*Ibid.*
[73]PRO30/30/10, M[ilner] to Lloyd George, 8 Mar.1919.
[74]PRO30/30/10, 'The French Claims in Syria', by Hirtzel, 14 Feb 1919, p.6.
[75]FO608/84/344/3/1, 'Boundaries of Arab Countries', by Forbes Adam, 9 Aug.1919, p.326.

of this thesis outlined Britain's worry that France might someday be a foe, but considering the alliance of 1914-18, this attitude was rather mean minded. In Clemenceau's account of the war in *Grandeur and Misery of Victory* he observed how the suffering of the war for Britain and France could have been turned to mutual advantage as historically, 'England was our oldest enemy. And now we have each saved the other, and the best of the blood of both nations has been freely spilt in doing it.'[76]

Forbes Adam's argument for Anglo-French co-operation, instead of confrontation, might have resulted in a more straight forward British policy towards the Arabs, and one which might have avoided the accusation of British duplicity: 'It would surely be more prudent to make an Anglo-French agreement which would include stabilising elements, such as the carrying of a railway and pipeline up the Euphrates to the natural westerly outlet of Mesopotamia, i.e. Alexandretta'.[77] There was no geographic solution to the fact that only a greatly reduced Syria would allow for an established all-British route from Palestine to Mesopotamia. The reduction was such that French *amour-propre* would not allow it to happen.

The northern Palestine boundary determined by the Franco-British convention of 23 December 1920, and delimited in 1922, placed the springs of the River Jordan in Palestine.[78] Writing to Balfour in 1920, Philip Kerr observed how France had agreed to a 'historic' Palestine, including the Dan spring, but excluding Mount Hermon and the River Litani as the French were, 'adamant about Hermon, which they say commands Damascus, and about the Litany [sic] river which is the main stream of the Bekaa'.[79] France's agreement to having the Palestine boundary pushed far beyond the line of the Sykes-Picot agreement was a further concession on her part. This compromise is evident today with Israel's protruded border near the towns of Qiryat Shemona and Metulla, and in 1919 was probably the only border adjustment that Britain was going to secure beyond what France had already agreed in December 1918. It should be remembered that for this concession on the Palestine-Lebanon border France received nothing in return. It must have seemed to British planners in 1919 that an extended Galilee frontier was not sufficient for effective British imperial security.

The above discussion has ignored the position of Prince Feisal as Britain's ally, and Feisal's part was significant in all these negotiations. For Britain Feisal's régime needed to be taken into consideration, the more so as

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[76]Clemenceau, *Grandeur and Misery of Victory* (1930) p.189.
[77]*Ibid.*
[78]H.C.Luke & E.Keith-Roach, *The Handbook of Palestine* (1922) p.1. The Banias and Hasbani springs were excluded from Palestine, but the Dan spring, Hulch Basin and Lake Tiberias were included.
[79]Kerr papers, GD40/17/206, Kerr to Balfour, 23 Feb.1920.

worrying reports were reaching London of the possibilities of a revolt led by Feisal if he were not supported against French ambitions. Britain was entangled by a situation of her own making, as promotion of Feisal in Damascus ended up restricting Britain's freedom to make decisions. Firstly, there was the worry that if Feisal's government in Syria were not supported, so as to exclude France from Syria entirely, a second Arab revolt might break out. To compound the fear of a revolt there was the mutinous situation within the British army based in Egypt, and the soldiers' discontent made the army seem less able than usual to put down any possible Arab disturbances.

The military status of Feisal, in large measure the result of his being installed in Damascus by Allenby's army, encouraged Lloyd George's attempt to resist France's wish for a British withdrawal from Syria. In May 1919 Allenby cabled home how:-

> A word from Feisal will bring against us all the warlike Bedouins from the east of Jordan, on whose friendly attitude depends the safety of Palestine and the security of my long lines of communication. A rising of these Bedouins would bring against us also the tribes of the Sinai Peninsula and serious troubles will certainly break out in Egypt...In such a case I shall be totally unable to handle the situation with the troops at my disposal.[80]

Allenby's sense of propriety towards Feisal was undoubtedly a factor influencing his 'alarming telegram', but it was real consternation on Allenby's part that was the basis of his conclusions as he was convinced that if Feisal attacked a French occupying force, 'it certainly would spread to a general attack on the English and with long lines of communication and in the present unsettled state of Egypt that would be a great danger'.[81] The Egyptian revolt of 1919 had been a violent and serious disturbance that was ended by deploying large numbers of troops to suppress the Egyptian fellahin. To keep Feisal placated the temporary solution was to send out a commission of enquiry known as the King-Crane Commission: 'It is certain that Feisal will raise the Arabs against the French and ourselves unless he can be officially reassured that the Commission is going out to decide the future of the country'.[82] This commission took some time to organise, and so before its departure Feisal had to be encouraged to keep Syria peaceful.

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[80]WO32/5580, Allenby to Balfour, WO & FO, 30 May 1919 (further copies in Kerr papers, GD40/17/38 & WO33/981).

[81]Derby papers, 920DER(17)28/1/2, diary, 1 June 1919 (discussing Syria and Allenby's reports).

[82]Balfour papers, Add.Mss.49752, memo for Clemenceau prepared by Sir I Malcolm, 1 June 1919.

General Allenby was genuinely concerned with the growing tension in Syria, cabling the War Office that, 'Feisal on the receipt of the telegram from his agent in Paris was about to proclaim the independence of Syria and attack the French. With difficulty he was dissuaded by my political officers at Damascus.'[83] Allenby's reports only served to confirm Lloyd George's intransigence, and reinforced his policy of prevarication.

The pro-Zionist stance of Britain in Palestine hardly eased matters as the potential for Arab-Jewish violence in Palestine was an added worry; one which came to a violent climax with rioting and deaths in 1920 in Palestine, and which would continue intermittently to the present-day. General Money, the military administrator of Palestine under Allenby, told Curzon in January 1919 that a, 'Jewish Government in any form would mean an Arab rising, and the nine-tenths of the population who are not Jews would make short shrift with the Hebrews'.[84] Allenby and the British military administration charged with ruling the Levant in the interim were in an exposed position. Their plight was not of their own making, and Allenby's insight into the political intrigues which were beyond his control is noticeable: 'I don't believe that you or the French know what dangerous stuff you are playing with. It does not matter which line cuts Syria in two—yours or Tardieu's. If Syria is divided, and the fate of the peoples decided without reference to them...you will light a fire that will blaze for years.'[85] Allenby's worries about 'grave troubles' if Feisal were disappointed shows how paradoxical was Britain's support for Feisal during the war years.[86] Feisal was essential for the exclusion, temporary or otherwise, of France from Syria, but Feisal and the Arabs were not dupes, as Allenby kept pointing out in his reports to London.

The violence surrounding the spring 1919 Egyptian revolt was a strong factor reinforcing the fear that an uprising by Feisal could seriously threaten Britain's position in the Middle East, and the Egyptian revolt 'greatly disturbed the decision-makers in London'.[87] Writing to Wilson in May 1919 Allenby observed that while Egypt was now quiet, it would, 'be necessary to picket the country...for certainly some months to come. Meanwhile I have been forced to resume demobilisation'.[88] Britain's position in Egypt was worsened by unrest within the British army based in Egypt. Pressure to demobilise did not make Allenby feel confident that his troops would be able to deal with another uprising on the scale of the Egyptian one, as he pointed out to the C.I.G.S.: 'There is great

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[83]WO106/192, Allenby to WO, 2 June 1919.
[84]Lloyd George papers, F/3/4/4, Curzon to Balfour, 16 Jan.1919.
[85]Lloyd George papers, F/47/8/22, Allenby to Henry Wilson, 6 June 1919. See also Wilson papers, HHW2/33B/18, Allenby to Wilson for similar comments.
[86]WO32/5580, Allenby to War Office, 2 June 1919.
[87]K.Jeffery, *The British Army and the crisis of empire 1918-22* (1984) p.112.
[88]Kerr papers, GD40/17/38, Allenby to H.Wilson, 17 May 1919.

unrest and discontent throughout my army; and, in the case of Administrative Services unrest verges on mutiny. Nothing will convince the troops that military operations did not end on the signing of the Armistice'.[89]

The evidence bears out Allenby's worries, and reinforces the view that Britain was in a most awkward situation in the Middle East. Gloden Dallas and Douglas Gill show in their study of mutinies in the British army during the First World War how the trouble in the Middle East started in Kantara on the Suez Canal as soon as the armistice was declared.[90] For those British and antipodean troops who had served in the Middle East getting home to reunite with families and again find civilian employment was particularly important, especially as very few had ever had any leave home. In contrast British troops in France did get leave home, although the leave allotments were erratic. By April 1919 there were attempts in Egypt, 'to form soldiers' councils, to appoint delegates, and to hold meetings to discuss demobilisation'.[91] Servicemen refused to obey their officers, and the authorities were forced to introduce steps, 'to release all 1914 and 1915 men as soon as possible in order to allay the growing unrest'.[92] In early-1919 there were incidents within Allenby's army verging on mutiny, and these disturbances are discussed in Lawrence James's biography of Allenby.[93] In May 1919 Allenby reported home how 'the situation is most acute', and how if men were not demobilised: 'I expect a refusal to work on the part of the Administrative Services and I fear this will spread to combatant units amongst whom, as you know, there is already unrest. I am convinced that these demands [to demobilise] should be met in order to obviate mutiny on a large scale'.[94] The Australians, the dependable core to Allenby's force, also seem to have been affected by the general discontent and desire to return home now the war was won. One of the regiments of the Australian Mounted Division stationed in Egypt was inspected by the divisional commander and addressed as they were refusing to carry out training.[95] The possible radical political element to the unrest in Egypt was remarked upon by Allenby who wrote to Henry Wilson on 21 April that, 'some trade union microbe has got into them...I can't shoot them all for mutiny; so I must carry on as best I can, and I must resume demobilisation.'[96]

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[89]Kerr papers, GD40/17/38, Allenby to H.Wilson, 17 May 1919.
[90]Dallas & Gill, *The Unknown Army: Mutinies in the British Army in World War One* (1985) p.122. The trouble in November 1918 is mentioned in WO33/960, GHQ Egypt to WO, 22 Nov.1918.
[91]WO33/981, GHQ Egypt to War Office, 14 June 1919 (discussing events in April 1919)
[92]*Ibid.*
[93]James, *Imperial Warrior: The Life and Times of Field-Marshal Viscount Allenby 1861-1936* (1993) ch.14 'White Mutinies and Brown Mischief'.
[94]WO33/981, Allenby to WO, 16 May 1919.
[95]AWM4[10/19], 14 ALH Regt, war diary, 15 Mar.1919.
[96]Wilson papers, HHW2/33B/13, Allenby to Wilson, 21 Apr.1919.

With the memories of the soldiers' soviets of the Russian Revolution fresh in the minds of British officers, the fears of the military authorities in Egypt are understandable and served to consolidate Lloyd George's policy of maintaining Feisal in Damascus.

The next official meeting to discuss Syria was on 20 March 1919 in Lloyd George's apartment in Paris.[97] At the discussions, at which Allenby, Pichon, Clemenceau, Balfour and President Wilson were present, Lloyd George pointed out that there were no differences between France and Britain and they could examine the Syrian question, 'in as disinterested a spirit as we could a Carpathian frontier'. Purposely ignoring the strategic significance of Syria, Lloyd George stressed the effort expended by Britain in the Palestine campaign and claimed that he 'had begged the French Government to cooperate' in Palestine. His emphasis on Allenby's war-time successes was a direct attempt to pressure the French. The evidence outlined in this chapter makes a nonsense of Lloyd George's claim that: 'M. Pichon seemed to think that we were departing from the 1916 agreement in other respects, as well as in respect to Mosul and Palestine. In fact, we were not.' Lloyd George's political gymnastics from January 1919 were an attempt to obtain French acceptance that more of Syria would have to pass to British control, and Feisal's position was openly used by Lloyd George to achieve this end. When Pichon said that, 'all that he asked was that France should have' Syria, Lloyd George turned down Pichon's request saying that, 'we could not do that. The League of Nations could not be used for putting aside our bargain with King Hussein. He asked if M. Pichon intended to occupy Damascus with French troops? If he did, it would clearly be a violation of the Treaty with the Arabs.'

Stephen Pichon naturally protested that Britain's agreements with the Hashemites through the Hussein-McMahon correspondence were nothing to do with France. Lloyd George shamelessly used the Palestine campaign to obstruct France: 'but it was England...who had organised the whole of the Syrian campaign. There would have been no question of Syria but for England'. Feisal's limited military usefulness to the E.E.F., outlined earlier in this thesis, had to be inflated, and Pichon told that the Northern Arab Army, 'helped us most materially to win the victory'. Ignoring the marginal help that the Arabs had been militarily, Lloyd George stressed the importance of the Hashemites. The French were to be forced to recognise Britain's commitment to the Hashemites and in doing so obviate French rule in Syria. What Clemenceau, still weak from his gunshot wounds, was thinking during this meeting can only be conjectured, as Pichon carried out most of the discussion on 20 March, and it was not until a second

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[97]Details of meeting in R.S.Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*, pp.1-19; Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, vol.ii, pp.684-695; Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East*, pp.50-59. All the following quotes from Hurewitz unless otherwise stated.

meeting in May 1919 that Clemenceau involved himself and in doing so lost his temper with Lloyd George. At the March meeting Allenby, concerned to keep the peace, supported Lloyd George's stance, although from different motives: 'General Allenby said there would be the strongest possible opposition by the whole of the Moslems, and especially by the Arabs' if France were invited to occupy Syria. Compared with Lloyd George's assertions in the same March meeting Allenby provided a thoughtful assessment of events in Syria, and showed how Britain's policy of making promises to the Hashemites was creating a complicated and tense situation between France, Britain and the Arabs. Allenby's opinion was that if the French, 'were given a mandate in Syria, there would be serious trouble and probably war...the consequences would be incalculable.' Allenby comes out of the March meeting as an unwilling accomplice of Lloyd George, but his strength of character and clear assessments show him to have been a fair and independent participant. The conclusion of the meeting was a proposal made by President Wilson to send out a commission to discern the wishes of the peoples of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia.

Lloyd George claimed in his account of the Syrian discussions in 1919 that it was Milner who was to blame for the delay in delimiting the spheres of military occupation. In a rather personal attack on Milner Lloyd George ignored that it was his own delaying tactics that were the cause of all the difficulties.[98] While Allenby's worry of a potential revolt headed by Feisal greatly influenced the actions of Lloyd George, border adjustments to Syria lay behind his behaviour.

The commission to the Levant was some time in the organising and at a further two day meeting in Paris from 21-22 May Clemenceau, who must have been at his wits' end, finally lost his temper.[99] The *Foreign Relations of the United States* account of the meeting does not do justice to Clemenceau's irritation, and it is with the recently translated account of the official interpreter, Paul Mantoux, that the tone of the meeting comes across. On 21 May Clemenceau refused to send French members with the planned Middle East commission, adding that the reason for this was that, 'the promises made to him had not been kept'.[100] Clemenceau then proceeded to detail how in December 1918 he had agreed to British control of Mosul and Palestine, after which: 'Lloyd

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[98]Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, vol.ii, pp.695-96.

[99]Transcripts of the May meeting in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Paris Peace Conference 1919* (1946) vol.v, pp.756-766, pp.807-812 and A.Link (ed), *The Deliberations of the Council of Four (March 24-June 28, 1919) Notes of Official Interpreter Paul Mantoux* (1992) pp.128-139, pp.160-165 (the *FRUS* version of the May meetings is also in CAB29/38).

[100]*FRUS*, vol.v, p.760.

George had said that France and Great Britain would get along all right'.[101] Having then discussed the French memorandum of February 1919 Clemenceau pointed out how after the French proposal in February: 'Lord Milner had produced a map by which Syria was divided in order to provide a railway for the British to Mesopotamia'.[102]

These May discussions in Paris were the culmination of all the negotiations from October 1918, and ended in an impasse. Elizabeth Monroe's comment that Lloyd George's 'retreat before Clemenceau over Syria took place by stages in the course of 1919' seems misplaced as until May 1919 Lloyd George was advancing, not retreating.[103] It was not until September 1919 that Lloyd George retreated before France and his disengagement in the autumn of 1919 was rapid and not in stages. In the May talks Lloyd George's ability to twist facts ended in Clemenceau being told that he, 'had not carried out his part of the bargain'.[104] Clemenceau had faithfully carried out his promises to Lloyd George and all that had been left to him in March 1919 was to insist that no French commissioner would go to the Middle East until British troops withdrew from Syria. Lloyd George then told Clemenceau that the proposals for a British railway to Mesopotamia 'were to the advantage of France', a statement which can have done little to calm the French leader's temper.[105]

Paul Mantoux's account of the meeting in May is more explicit on the deliberations, with Clemenceau telling Lloyd George: 'I have thus abandoned Mosul and Cilicia; I have made the concessions you asked of me without hesitation, because you told me that, afterwards, no difficulty would remain. But I won't accept what you propose today: my government would be overthrown the next day, and even I would vote against it.'[106] Henry Wilson, negotiating for Britain with Tardieu, was unable to settle Syria's borders until the politicians in Paris came to an accord, but Lloyd George's further demands were making a Syrian settlement very difficult. Clemenceau, with his attention diverted by the impending Versailles treaty with Germany, must have been tired of Lloyd George's insistence on drawing out the Syrian settlement, and he pointed out to Lloyd George that he was, 'taking Mosul, Cilicia, part of Syria from France in order to let a railroad run through...That seems to me a bit thick.'[107] In Mantoux's account Clemenceau insisted that he refused to send French

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[101] *Ibid.*
[102] *Ibid.*
[103] E.Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East: 1914-1956* (1963) p.63.
[104] *FRUS*, p.763.
[105] *Ibid.*, p.766.
[106] Mantoux, *Deliberations of the Council of Four*, p.133.
[107] *Ibid.*

commissioners while Syria was, 'under the dictatorship of General Allenby'.[108] This was an unfair evaluation of Allenby, and ignored Allenby's reactive position carrying out the policies decided by Lloyd George. Lloyd George's strident tones on 21 May as he defended himself to Clemenceau seem incongruous, the more so as Clemenceau was well aware what Lloyd George was trying to do. Lloyd George's skill in manipulating the facts was nowhere more evident than when he asked Clemenceau for an apology following the Frenchman's protests that France was being treated unfairly: 'we will go our way without worrying further. I have done everything I could to meet the wishes of the French in Syria...I feel that Clemenceau should apologize for having made that [breach of faith] accusation against us'. To Lloyd George's request Clemenceau replied: 'Don't wait for apologies on my part'.[109]

The talks of the 21 May at President Wilson's residence continued the following day in Lloyd George's apartment. Clemenceau insisted on the 22nd that he would never have made the December 1918 deal if he had known how his agreeing to the loss of Mosul and Palestine would lead to more excessive demands by Britain. Lloyd George's response was again to use France's small contribution to the E.E.F. to pressure Clemenceau, ignoring that French troops had been purposely excluded from the E.E.F. by the British so as to reduce France's position. For Lloyd George the line excluding Tadmor proposed by France would, 'put the British railway entirely at the mercy of the French oil interests. All that was asked was that the line should go direct and give us Tadmor.'[110] The argument that Lloyd George's concern was to occupy Tadmor to secure imperial communications is reinforced by the Prime Minister's comment to Clemenceau that:-

> We are reproached for having drawn boundaries on this map different from those which the French had accepted. But the cessation of Mosul would be without any value if the line of demarcation across the desert remained as it was. Mosul would be at the mercy of the power which controlled the nearest oases.[111]

The finale of Lloyd George's and Clemenceau's meeting is described more graphically by Colonel Meinertzhagen, back in Paris for the peace talks, who was at the May meetings:-

> Clemenceau said he could not accept our line as it destroyed France's Syrian Dream. Lloyd George said he could accept nothing less than our

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[108] *Ibid.*, p.138.
[109] *Ibid.*
[110] *FRUS*, p.810.
[111] Mantoux, *Deliberations of the Council of Four*, p.163.

> line. More explosions and shouting. Finally Lloyd George told Clemenceau that not one single French soldier should land in Syria till he had accepted our line. More explosions. The meeting broke up with violent protests. So we have wired to Allenby telling him no more French troops need be expected and direct hin [sic] to atonce [sic] occupy Palmyra. So much for the greedy French who will not accommodate us at all in any part of the Globe.[112]

Meinertzhagen expanded on the events of 22 May in a letter to Lt.-Col. Gribbon, and the storminess of the May meetings obviously struck Meinertzhagen: 'Tiger fumed and exploded. Couldn't accept our line, death of French aspirations...à bas les Juifs, Britain wants everything, France being humiliated and it's bad for France to be thwarted. "Very well" says P.M. "we are in possession...in Syria till our line is accepted". more explosions and exit.'[113] Henry Wilson recorded in his diary how the, 'Tiger says that L.G. has cheated so much over the matter that he won't play any more', and Maurice Hankey noted that both leaders 'lost their tempers violently' and that Clemenceau on leaving the 21 May meeting told Lloyd George that he was 'the very badest boy'.[114] The evidence in this chapter strongly supports France's suspicions of British actions, and shows that Britain had clear aims for her position in the Middle East and tried to realise them in the March and May meetings.

General Allenby was not responsible for the Syrian impasse, and Allenby's role in directly deciding policy was minor. Allenby was wired following the May meeting and told to stop French soldiers going to Syria.[115] Allenby was also instructed to occupy Tadmor, to which he replied that Tadmor's garrisoning would be impossible. Allenby's pointing out of the military difficulties of implementing London's policy needs to be set against Lloyd George's involved negotiations in Paris. By the summer of 1919 Lloyd George and the British had got themselves in a position over Syria for which there was no simple solution.

Georges Clemenceau's unwillingness to give in resulted in Lloyd George formally and perfunctorily confirming by letter an oral statement on 21 May cancelling the December 1918 arrangement, and with it the Long-Bérenger oil agreement of April 1919 which the French ambassador had been notified of on 16 May.[116] The informal character of the December 1918 deal was nowhere

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[112]Meinertzhagen diaries, vol.21, 22 May 1919.
[113]WO106/191, Meinertzhagen to Gribbon, 22 May 1919.
[114]Wilson papers, diaries, reel 8, 6 June 1919; Hankey papers, diary 1/5, 21 May 1919.
[115]WO106/191, Meinertzhagen to Gribbon, 22 May 1919
[116]FO608/102/378/1/1, 'British proposal for railway and pipe-line from Mosul', May 1919 encl. Lloyd George to Clemenceau, 21 May 1919, p 56. Copy of letter of 21 May in Lloyd George papers, F/33/2/66. For 16 May notification see FO368/2095/94556, FO to Kerr, 4 July 1919

more evident than with the pencilled Foreign Office comment on the copy of the above letter: 'What is this? Political and Economic Section have no record of any such agreement'.[117] In his desire to secure a corridor from Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean Lloyd George completely upset the oil negotiations between Long and Bérenger. Lloyd George's unilateral withdrawal from the talks with Clemenceau obviated implementation of the Anglo-French oil accord that had all but been agreed by May 1919. The Foreign Office note of 30 May on Lloyd George's actions shows the stage that the Long-Bérenger talks had reached. 'The proposed agreement [on oil] has been approved by every single Govt. Dept. concerned, by the Eastern Committee...by the War Cabinet. The French have been officially informed that H.M.G. approve its terms.'[118] That the division of Mosul's oil would have to wait the Syrian border settlement was apparent: 'Lloyd George is now quite definitely of the opinion that until the pending controversy with France about Syria has been settled, he would like these oil negotiations to remain momentarily in abeyance'.[119]

Lloyd George's behaviour in May 1919 supports the argument in Chapter Six that the Prime Minister would by-pass formal procedures when it suited him. The note by the commercial department at the Foreign Office on Lloyd George's reneging on the Long-Bérenger agreement was: 'This comes as a complete bombshell...The agreement was discussed and considered ad nauseam...Lloyd George appears to have withdrawn the agreement in connexion with the pipe-line clauses'.[120] The commercial department added how they could not imagine why Clemenceau objected to the pipe-line concession unless the French, 'want to blackmail us further. The French are rapidly becoming altogether impossible and we shall have to make a stand some day.'[121] Criticism of Lloyd George's methods of pursuing national ends must be measured against his having to follow a difficult course dealing with various government departments and foreign powers, most of whom had particular interests to realise. The Foreign Office was an example of a government department that would complain about Lloyd George's behaviour without realising that less aggressive methods might not have succeeded: 'The Foreign Office fully intended that Mesopotamian oil should be exploited, once Britain received the mandate for Mesopotamia, and did not see why it should have to promise France...an unnecessary slice of the cake'.[122]

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[117] *Ibid.*

[118] FO608/102 378/1/1, 'British proposal for railway and pipe-line from Mosul', handwritten note by Tufton, 30 May 1919, p.54.

[119] *Ibid*, note to Tufton, 30 May 1919, p.53.

[120] FO368/2095/85781, Anglo-French oil agreement, minute by commercial department, 11 June 1919 [by G.Clerk?].

[121] *Ibid.*

[122] M Kent, *Oil and Empire: British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil 1900-1920* (1976) p.138.

Paris was the centre for decision-making in 1919 and Curzon had to write to Kerr in July 1919 to find out whether he should inform government departments and the French ambassador that the oil arrangement agreed on 16 May was now cancelled.[123] Curzon in London was isolated, and it was Lloyd George who was making all the important decisions. Lloyd George claimed to Curzon in July 1919 that he did not know of the oil talks between Long and Bérenger and this seems incongruous.[124] It may have been that with all that was going on Lloyd George was not informed of the talks on Mosul's oil, but that Long and Bérenger had been in discussion since January 1919 makes one suspect that Lloyd George did know and was being purposely circumspect.

That Britain should have gone through with the oil arrangement of 16 May and co-operated with France as it was the best arrangement that Britain would get, is reinforced by Eustace Percy, who, with the British delegation in Paris, wrote to Kerr that: 'To tear up the whole agreement would...be most prejudicial both to French and British interests as it is part of the general negotiations for eliminating the German interests in the Dutch Shell Company and replacing them by British interests'.[125] The British undoubtedly wanted a controlling share in the Royal Dutch-Shell oil company and their attempts in this direction are outlined in detail in Marian Kent's chapter on the oil talks.[126] The multi-national nature of the oil industry was such that oil-consuming countries were to find that uniting together was the best way of exploiting oil-production.

Having agreed to send out a commission to the Middle East, Britain and France, who did not send delegates, were forced to await the conclusions of the American commissioners, Henry King and Charles Crane.[127] The commissioners' report was submitted in August 1919, but Britain and France had no intention of taking notice of the recommendation that if a mandate were assigned, America should be the mandatory power.[128] America was not prepared to assume responsibility in the Middle East, preferring to follow a policy of isolationism. The commission's conclusion was that if America could not be the mandatory power then Britain, but not France, should be put in charge. The French refusal to send commissioners was used by Britain as the reason for not

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[123]FO368/2095/94556, FO to Kerr, 4 July 1919.

[124]Lloyd George papers, F/12/1/25, memorandum on Anglo-French oil agreement, 10 July 1919 (copy in Woodward & Butler (eds), *D B F.P.*, first series, vol.iv, Davies to Curzon, 11 July 1919, p.1100.) See also Lloyd George papers, F/12/1/25(a), message to FO, 12 June 1919.

[125]Lloyd George papers, F/92/14/2, Percy to Kerr, 29 May 1919.

[126]Kent, *Oil and Empire: British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil*, ch.8.

[127]There is an abridged version of the recommendations of the commission in Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East* (1956) pp.66-74. For a full analysis see Harry Howard, *An American Inquiry in the Middle East: The King-Crane Commission* (1963).

[128]The King-Crane report was not made public until the 1920s. The commissioners gave a summary of their findings to the American delegation in late-August 1919 (see H.N.Howard, *The King-Crane Commission*, pp.218, 321).

sending commissioners, and the consequent lack of any French or British involvement diminished the commission's standing.[129] As David Gilmour shows, the negative Anglo-French attitude towards the King-Crane commission can be contrasted with President Wilson's more idealistic attitude: 'The schemes of Lloyd George and Clemenceau were threatened by President Wilson's plan to send out an international commission to consult the inhabitants before their territories were distributed between the two powers'.[130] The threat, however, to Britain and France would only become real if President Wilson were to use the findings of the commission. That this was unlikely is remarked on by Elizabeth Monroe, whose opinion was that Wilson failed to, 'grasp that consultation is a virtue only if the consulting authority has the will and ability to act on what it learns'.[131] President Wilson was overly idealistic and unrealistic in his dealings with Britain and France, but his hopes for self-determination foundered not simply on Anglo-French intransigence, but also on American isolationism and his own stroke in the autumn of 1919, which diminished his ability to influence Lloyd George and Clemenceau. In August 1917 Lord Esher wrote critically of President Wilson, pointing to the dangers of Wilson's ideals which were akin to the early Christians who, 'destroyed the Roman Empire, and plunged Europe into the darkness of the Middle Ages'.[132] Esher was reflecting Anglo-French hostility toward Wilson's opposition to their dividing up the Middle East. Esher's view was uncompromising, as he thought Wilson, 'vain and "swelled-headed", who thinks that where Buddha and Christ have failed, he can succeed'.[133]

Elie Kedourie's critical study of British policy in this period is scathing in its analysis of the King-Crane commission which, 'manifested itself and went away. The report of the two commissioners was as ill-formed as its influence on policy was negligible.'[134] Kedourie went on to observe that the commission, 'raised false hopes, and gave rise to intrigue and intimidation. It exacerbated political passions and thereby made a peaceful settlement immeasurably more difficult.'[135] However, the King-Crane commission was the logical outcome of Britain's policy towards the Middle East, if not from late-1918, then certainly from early-1919. The commission, and the concomitant political vicissitudes over Syria in 1919, were a direct result of Britain's sponsoring of the Arab Revolt from June 1916 and attempt to use the Arabs to coerce the French. With all the

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[129]Kerr papers, GD40/17/38, sub-committee to Allenby, 31 May 1919.
[130]D. Gilmour, *Curzon* (1994) pp.519-20.
[131]E.Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East*, p.63.
[132]Esher papers, 2/20, letter to Haig, 12 Aug 1917.
[133]Esher papers, 2/20, letter to Stamfordham (George Vs private secretary), 24 Aug.1917.
[134]Kedourie, *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire 1914-1921* (1987) p.147.
[135]*Ibid.*

contemporary evidence available, Britain's support for the Hashemites seems excessive. Lloyd George, however, could not predict events, and thus Feisal as an ally seemed to be a valuable asset for Britain. The more so considering the analysis in Chapter Six outlining Britain's concern about the uncertain future of Anatolia, Armenia and Trans-Caucasia. The Hashemites also provided Britain with a friendly government in the Hedjaz — a situation rudely over turned in the 1920s by Ibn Saud — and were also to prove useful at the Cairo conference in 1921, providing Britain with rulers for Iraq and Trans-Jordan.

General Allenby seems to have been an unwitting accomplice to Britain's use of the King-Crane commission so as to secure some breathing space in Anglo-French discussions. On 21 May Allenby complained to the War Office that the machinations in London and Paris were making his position difficult, and laid, 'H.M. Government in whose name I have assured inhabitants that report of Commission will settle their future Government, open to imputation of bad faith'.[136] Allenby complained that he was not being informed of policy decisions; having spoken to François Picot Allenby cabled home in June, before King and Crane arrived at Jaffa, how Picot had told him that the, 'American Commission is only coming out to keep Feisal in the dark while partition of Syria is being arranged and that Syria is being divided without reference to Feisal...this is a dangerous game to play...Feisal will undoubtedly take hostile action.'[137] For Britain the aim of the commission was precisely to keep Feisal from causing difficulties until Britain could come to a satisfactory arrangement with France. Allenby was also of the view that the commission was vital as without it there would be 'serious outbreaks of Anti-Zionist and Xenophobe character', violence which the announcement of the commission had 'temporarily pacified'.[138] France was even more sceptical about the worth of any commission, suspecting — rightly — that Syrians did not want French rule. Allenby certainly had no part in the plan to ignore the commission's findings, and had been told by Balfour on 31 May that, 'you appear to think that the Commission will decide the future of the various ex-Turkish territories. That is not correct. They will have no power to decided'.[139]

In the hiatus afforded by the King-Crane commission France intensified her press campaign against British occupation of Syria. The French press and government worked together and attacked Britain's Middle Eastern policy. Lloyd George complained to Kerr that France's, 'articles on Syria have been perfectly intolerable. They openly attack Great Britain and I am told their letters to the

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[136]WO106/191, Allenby to War Office, 21 May 1919.
[137]WO32/5580, Allenby to WO, 1 June 1919.
[138]Wilson papers, HHW2/33B/18, Allenby to Wilson, 3 June 1919 (see also *ibid.*, 16 Apr.1919 for similar comments from Allenby).
[139]Woodward & Butler (eds), *DBFP*, vol.iv, Balfour to Allenby, 31 May 1919, p.259.

Foreign Office complaining of Allenby...are couched in language which, before the war, would have been regarded as full of menace.'[140] Reviewing a long article by the Frenchman, Robert de Caix, the Middle East correspondent of *The Times* on 6 September 1919 observed how Caix's piece was, 'a prolonged and serious indictment of British good faith'. Allenby's military administration was a particular target of French criticism, and the French organised petitions from Lebanese-Syrian communities all over the world to push for a French Syria. Even the Syrian community living on the Yucatán Peninsula in Mexico sent a message requesting French rule in Syria. This petition prompted the Foreign Office to minute: 'The French are overdoing their campaign!'[141]

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Lloyd George's administration was robust enough to resist French criticism, and the decision to withdraw the E.E.F., analysed in the next chapter, was a result of British strategic calculations, rather than any real concern about upsetting France. Having said this, the tension that Syria was causing Anglo-French relations was a strong factor encouraging Britain to withdraw, and French encouragement through media such as the press helped maintain the pressure on Lloyd George's administration. Much of the dispute between Lloyd George and Clemenceau was 'shadow boxing' between two astute and experienced politicians. But their differences over Syria seem to have been more marked than usual, and reflected Lloyd George's attempts, as Clemenceau saw it, to treat unfairly France's claim to Syria. The evidence outlined in this chapter supports Clemenceau's view. Ultimately Britain and France had the matching aim of establishing themselves in the Middle East, and it was President Wilson's more genuine hopes for Arab self-determination that was the common enemy. This does, of course, beg the question of whether Wilson's hopes were unrealistic in the international political climate of 1919. Had Lloyd George not been concerned to add territory to Palestine and Mesopotamia, most especially the Tadmor region, a Middle East settlement might have been reached earlier.

The Anglo-French oil discussions proceeded smoothly and assumed a French share in Mosul's oil, but in the final instance the talks were reliant on Lloyd George and Clemenceau reaching an agreement before the Long-Bérenger arrangement could be ratified. This all assumes, however, that Feisal would have acquiesced in such a settlement. It was his potential to unleash an Arab revolt that made him a figure who needed to be considered, the more so as Allenby's own

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[140]Lloyd George papers, F/89/2/8, LG to Kerr, 12 Feb.1919. For similar comments see also J Nevakivi, *Britain, France and the Arab Middle East 1914-20* (191969) p.172.
[141]FO608 96/367/2/3, Message from Syrio-Lebanese Committee of Yucatán, 14 Feb.1919.

assessment was that Feisal could seriously upset Britain's position if he called an uprising. That Feisal could do this was a result of Allenby's army having installed him in Damascus, and thus raises the question of whether this original decision to do this was prudent. Allenby himself was in an exposed position while these negotiations were being pursued, especially as he had the Egyptian Revolt to suppress in the spring of 1919. The French vehemently insisted that Allenby's military administration was biased, ignoring that British officers were attempting to keep the peace in a tense situation. France was targeting the E.E.F. army of occupation in an effort to pressure Lloyd George, and the French would have known that the policy to exclude her from Syria was one emanating from London, and not from within the staff of the E.E.F. With the treaty of Versailles signed on 28 June 1919 the Syrian question was that much easier to resolve as there was not the distraction of the more important German settlement. In the end France's insistence on what she saw as being her rights in Syria resulted in her being allowed into Syria. France's success in gaining the mandate for Syria seems to have been a pyrrhic victory; one which reflected a sentimentality on France's part, and a desire to make her war losses seem not to have been in vain. France wanted Syria as much for its emotional value as for any strategic usefulness. Britain's political calculations of the benefits to be had in the Middle East were more objective and far-sighted, and had been so since Allenby's arrival in Egypt in June 1917. The power of Allenby's expeditionary force gave Britain this ability to plan ahead and coerce other powers interested in the Middle East. However, whether Britain was being sufficiently detached and calculating with her attempts from January to May 1919 to modify Syria's boundary is questionable. This chapter has shown how Lloyd George's hopes in this direction were inappropriate considering the geographic and political impossibilities of occupying Tadmor. France had only to wait and let events show Lloyd George that his stubbornness was futile.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DÉNOUEMENT; THE BRITISH WITHDRAW FROM SYRIA, SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER 1919.

> 'Because we lack money', wrote "Boney" Fuller in 1922, 'we cannot increase the size of the army to fit the Empire; consequently there is only one thing we can do, namely reduce the size of the Empire to fit our army.' (quoted in Keith Jeffery, *The British army and the crisis of empire* (1984) p.160.)

Chapter Eight concludes the study in Chapters Six and Seven which detailed the political and imperial aspects to Allenby's occupation of Palestine and Syria. This is the third level of analysis described in the Introduction to this thesis. This chapter will outline how and why Britain did finally withdraw General Allenby's occupation force from Syria. Considering the not inconsiderable time and effort expended by Lloyd George in excluding France from Syria this action is significant. Allenby's part in these events will also be touched upon in an evaluation of his role and position in British strategy from 1917-1919.

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The conclusions of the King-Crane commission were sent in a summary form to President Wilson on 30 August 1919.[1] As was shown in Chapter Six, Britain and France planned to pay little attention to the commission's findings, and before Henry King and Charles Crane submitted their report Britain was resolving her policy toward Syria. On 20 August Lord Curzon wrote to Arthur Balfour how, 'the burden of maintaining an English and Indian Army of 320,000 men in the various parts of the Turkish Empire and in Egypt...with its overwhelming cost, is one that cannot any longer be sustained'.[2] The cost of overseas garrisons at a time of retrenchment, imperial consolidation and demobilisation was to be a deciding factor in Britain's withdrawal of its army of occupation in Syria (and its armies from many other parts of Europe, Asia and Africa). The actual decision to pull out of Syria was made with alacrity in a series of meetings from 6-15 September 1919 when Lloyd George was vacationing in France, and Jukka Nevakivi rightly observed that Lloyd George had finally decided to cut the 'Gordian knot'.[3] In under two weeks Lloyd George reversed his previous policy, and this *volte-face* was a reflection of Clemenceau's stand in his meeting with Lloyd George on 21-

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[1]H.N.Howard, *An American Inquiry in the Middle East: The King-Crane Commission* (1963) p.218.

[2]Balfour papers, Add.Mss.49734, Curzon to Balfour, 20 Aug.1919.

[3]J.Nevakivi, *Britain, France and the Arab Middle East 1914-1920* (1969) p.188. Copies of the September meetings in CAB21/153.

22 May. Henry Wilson wrote to Allenby in June 1919 pointing out how the French leader, 'flatly refused to allow any Frenchmen to form part of the Commission and he appears now to be going to go back and stand on the Sykes-Picot Agreement'.[4] Wilson went on to observe that if Clemenceau were to do this he would 'be within his rights', and the result would 'be the devil for us'.[5] The difficulty by the autumn of 1919 was that Britain could not easily settle the Syrian imbroglio, and this was pointed out by Henry Wilson in the same June 1919 letter to Allenby: 'We have made so many promises to everybody in a contradictory sense that I cannot for the life of me see how we can get out of our present mess without breaking our word to somebody'.[6]

Lloyd George realised that he was not going to achieve anything by further resistance to implementing the December 1918 arrangement. While Clemenceau was unlikely to have been able to restore the Sykes-Picot agreement in its original form, his obvious annoyance in the May meetings showed the limits to his patience over the unresolved question of Syria. The importance of France as compared to Feisal was to result in the Emir being left to negotiate with the French. The relative standing of the two parties was commented on by Richard Meinertzhagen who noted in July 1919 how Balfour felt it was now, 'preferable to quarrel with the Arab rather than the French'.[7] Resolution of the Syrian impasse was quickened by an awareness that the United States was not going to assume a mandate for any of the Ottoman empire and, as Curzon pointed out to Balfour, 'settlement of the Eastern Question cannot be postponed even till the date at which Wilson may have persuaded, or failed to persuade, the Senate to make up its mind about a Turkish Mandate'.[8] Curzon was right to emphasise the role of America who was reverting to a policy of isolationism, and was thus unlikely to involve herself as a mandatory power in the Middle East. President Wilson had a paralytic stroke on 26 September 1919 and his illness served to reinforce American distance from the European peace settlements. America's position, coupled with French stubbornness and domestic pressures in Britain, made the autumn of 1919 a propitious moment for Lloyd George to withdraw Allenby's Syrian garrison.

The rapidity and unilateral nature of the decision to withdraw is noteworthy. The events of early-September 1919 have similarities to the December 1918 Anglo-French arrangement. Once Lloyd George had determined what the course of action should be he saw little reason for procrastination. On holiday at Deauville on the French coast from August 1919 Lloyd George was

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[4]Wilson papers, HHW2/33B/17, Wilson to Allenby, 5 June 1919.
[5]Wilson papers, HHW2/33B/17, Wilson to Allenby, 5 June 1919.
[6]Wilson papers, HHW2/33B/17, Wilson to Allenby, 5 June 1919.
[7]Meinertzhagen diaries, volume 21, 30 July 1919 (in Paris).
[8]Balfour papers, Add Mss 49734, Curzon to Balfour, 20 Aug.1919.

visited by Balfour and Philip Kerr on 6 September, and then on 8 September Allenby arrived in France en route to Britain.[9] Allenby was back in Europe to be made into a field marshal and receive his viscountcy as rewards for his war-service. One sees, as in March 1919, the importance of having Allenby's contribution at important decision-making moments.

Having discussed Syria with various experts at Deauville Lloyd George went to Paris and met Clemenceau on 13 September, to whom he gave an eleven point aide-mémoire.[10] Britain's commitment to withdraw her Syrian garrison from 1 November was finally being put into action, and Clemenceau pointedly refused to be bound by point four of the aide-mémoire that detailed how the British garrisons at Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo would be replaced by Arab units. At the meeting in Paris on 15 September where the Syrian question was settled, Clemenceau only accepted that part of the aide-mémoire which outlined the British withdrawal, and Britain's need to withdraw gave the French a commanding position:-

> Clemenceau, on behalf of the French Government, accepted Mr Lloyd George's proposal for the evacuation by the British Army of Syria and Cilicia and their replacement by French troops in Cilicia and in Syria west of the Sykes-Picot line, on the distinct understanding that, in accepting this proposal, the French Government was not committed to acceptance of any other part of the arrangement proposed in Mr Lloyd George's Aide Mémoire.[11]

Britain's weak position and reliance on French goodwill toward Feisal was commented on by Curzon, who wrote to Derby in November 1919 how he was surprised that the French had agreed to meet Feisal and discuss Syria's future as, 'All that we could do here, having given ourselves away by the Prime Minister's "aide-mémoire" to Clemenceau, was to bring pressure to bear upon the French...to exercise a good deal of tact and discretion in not advancing beyond the coastal area'.[12] Britain's 13 September 1919 aide-mémoire was the culmination of Allenby's campaign, the end of Lloyd George's attempt to alter the borders of Syria, and the conclusion to the study of this thesis. Clemenceau's view was that France could now implement article 1 of the Sykes-Picot

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[9]Nevakivi, *Britain, France and the Arab Middle East*, ch.ix has a detailed outline of the September discussions; there is also a summary in CAB1/29, file 4, 'Summary of the Proceedings in Paris with regard to Syria', prepared by M.Hankey, 17 Sept.1919.

[10]There are copies of the 'Aide-Mémoire in regard to the Occupation of Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia pending the Decision in regard to Mandates' in Nevakivi, *Britain, France and the Arab Middle East*, appendix c; CAB1/29, file 4; Kerr papers, GD40/17/1343; and CAB21/204.

[11]WO32/5730, Conclusions of a meeting of the Heads of delegations of the Five Principal Allied and Associated Powers, held in Clemenceau's room at the War Office, Paris 15 Sept.1919.

[12]Derby papers, 920DER(17)28/2/2, Curzon to Derby, 25 Nov.1919.

agreement whereby France would 'recognise and protect' the Arab state in Syria, and Dockrill and Douglas Goold's comment that this was achieved 'without paying any price whatsoever' ignores the concessions that France had made in December 1918, and were yet to make over Palestine's northern border when this frontier was demarcated in the early-1920s.[13]

The correspondence following the September aide-mémoire reflected Clemenceau's exasperation at Britain's position. Now that Britain was finally agreeing to withdraw from Syria Clemenceau sarcastically wrote to Lloyd George on 14 October 1919 to inform the Prime Minister that he could , 'thoroughly understand the difficulty in which English negotiators find themselves after being driven by political necessities to enter into engagements both with the King of the Hedjaz and with France which, if not in opposition the one to the other, are at any rate difficult to adjust'.[14] Clemenceau's criticism of British policy brought a brisk reply from Lloyd George who pointed out that the, 'tone of your telegram took me entirely by surprise...I can hardly conceive of a more offensive imputation made by one Ally to another, after five years of comradeship in arms'.[15]

Georges Clemenceau must have drawn some satisfaction from Lloyd George's predicament, and was, for a short time, able to turn the tables on the British leader. That he could to do so was a product of domestic British concerns promoting British withdrawal. Clemenceau himself told Feisal in November 1919 that Lloyd George had informed him on 15 September that, 'the exigencies of demobilisation would force him to withdraw the British troops from Cilicia and Syria', and the analysis in Chapter Seven of the discontent within Allenby's forces supports the view that conscripted men were most anxious about returning home.[16]

In David Watson's biography of Clemenceau he asserts that in September 1919 Lloyd George 'at last faced realities' over Syria.[17] In fact, September 1919 was the most opportune moment for withdrawal, and Lloyd George was attempting to extricate Britain from an awkward position. This position was one Britain had entered into willingly in an attempt to increase her negotiating powers. The realisation that neither France, Italy or America were going to

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[13]Kerr papers, GD40/17/1343/8, reply by Clemenceau to telegrams from Lloyd George, 14 Oct.1919; M.Dockrill and J.Douglas Goold, *Peace without Promise: Britain and the Peace Conferences, 1919-23* (1981) p.166.

[14]Kerr papers, GD40/17/1343 10, Clemenceau to Lloyd George, 14 Oct.1919 quoted in *ibid.*, Lloyd George to Clemenceau, 18 Oct.1919.

[15]Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference* (1939) vol.ii, p.700 (also in Lloyd George papers, F/51/1/41). For similar comments from Lloyd George see also Kerr papers, GD40/17/1343/9, LG to Clemenceau, 15 Oct.1919.

[16]CAB21/204, Clemenceau to Feisal, 2 Nov.1919, p.2.

[17]Watson, *Georges Clemenceau: A Political Biography* (1974) p.370.

assume responsibility for Armenia and the Caucasus region meant that French occupation of Syria was not the worry it might have been. The need for Britain to retrench and demobilise exacerbated the problem of costly and often needless overseas garrisons. By late-1919 it was becoming impossible to match up Britain's overseas commitments with budget constraints and a reduced army. Britain's difficulties in this respect are best outlined by Keith Jeffery in *The British army and the crisis of empire 1918-22* (1984) where he shows that by 1922, 'Britain was well set on her inter-war path of strictly limited international responsibilities'.[18] In Egypt in 1919 the number of troops had been reduced to 128,000 from 400,000 earlier in the year. However, 'no further reduction was possible until the British withdrew from Syria', and more generally rationalised her Middle Eastern — and global — commitments.[19] In March 1920 there were still 100,000 men in Egypt and it was not until the middle of 1921 that Egypt's garrison was reduced to 20,000.[20] For many British planners it must have seemed easier during the First World War, as Roger Adelson points out in his doctoral thesis: 'Gone were the days of war emergency when departments had, in effect, a blank cheque from the exchequer...vast expenditures in the Middle East had to cease.'[21] In August 1919 a British government report showed how the cost for 'white' troops in Egypt and Palestine was £13 million per annum, the same as the Irish garrison, and there was an added £13.5 million for 'coloured' troops and prisoner of war upkeep.[22]

In a letter to Clemenceau in October 1919 Lloyd George outlined his position on the Middle East, and pointed out that the delay on America's part in determining her position on accepting a Turkish mandate was causing difficulties. The dominance of domestic factors is brought out in Lloyd George's letter, and supports the argument in the previous chapter that French pressure was not the determining factor for the decision to withdraw from Syria. Lloyd George was clear that Britain should, 'cease to make itself responsible for the occupation of Syria. It was essential that she should demobilise her troops and limit her responsibilities. Pressure of both public opinion and financial necessity left no other course open to the British Government.'[23]

Earlier, in August 1919, one of Lloyd George's personal secretaries,

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[18]Jeffery, *The British army and the crisis of empire 1918-22*, p.161.
[19]Jeffery, *British army*, p.113.
[20]*Ibid.*
[21]R.D.Adelson, 'The Formation of British Policy Towards the Middle East, 1914-1918 (Ph.D. thesis, Washington University 1972) p.483.
[22]Milner papers, III/B/136, 'Strength of forces in various theatres (India excepted) at beginning of August 1919 and approximate current cost'.
[23]Lloyd George papers, F/51/1/41, Lloyd George to Clemenceau, 18 Oct.1919, pp.13-14. Lloyd George makes similar comments in message to Clemenceau, 10 Sept.1919 (in Kerr papers, GD40/17/39).

Philip Kerr, had written to the Prime Minister to say that it was impossible for Britain to 'police the world', and that although massacres of Armenians could well result from Britain's withdrawal from the Caucasus region, America should take some responsibility for garrisoning the region: 'If America was so solicitous about results, why did they not send some troops themselves'.[24] Lloyd George wrote to Feisal in October 1919 that Britain's occupation of Syria involved 'a heavy burden of expense' and that Britain had to withdraw from Syria.[25] Britain would ideally have preferred to agree a Syrian settlement as part of the wider Turkish settlement that was to culminate with the treaty of Sèvres in 1920, but the delay in the Turkish settlement meant that Britain had to pull out of Syria before Sèvres was finalised.[26]

General Allenby wrote to Henry Wilson that the French general in charge in the Middle East, Henri Gouraud, had 'shown some commonsense and tact in Syria', and Feisal and the French came to a secret agreement in December 1919 which was a beginning to developing Franco-Arab relations.[27] This agreement, however, came to nothing as with Clemenceau's passing from power in the elections in January 1920, and the accession of Alexandre Millerand as French Prime Minister, Franco-Arab relations rapidly deteriorated. This unfortunate situation is commented on by Dan Eldar, who shows that, 'Millerand called a halt to the friendly relations which had begun to develop between Faysal and France at the end of 1919'.[28]

At a series of meetings in September and October 1919 in London at which Feisal was present, his need to come to an arrangement with France was made evident as he saw that Britain was unilaterally withdrawing from Syria.[29] Lloyd George seemed to think that Feisal might survive French designs on Syria, as on 19 September he reminded Feisal that Allenby would replace his Syrian garrison with Arab troops, and that Britain would, 'ask for the right to make a railway and oil pipeline through the Arab State from Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean'.[30] Maurice Hankey wrote to Thomas Jones of the War Cabinet secretariat on 9 September concerning the impending talks in Paris and of the importance of securing Tadmor, and this is further evidence of Britain's wish

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[24]Lloyd George papers, F/89/4/1, Kerr to Lloyd George, 8 Aug.1919.
[25]Davidson papers, file 103, Lloyd George to Feisal, 10 Oct.1919.
[26]Kemalist rejection of the treaty of Sèvres obviated its implementation.
[27]Quote Wilson papers, HHW2/33B/25, Allenby to Wilson, 6 Dec.1919. Secret agreement see Dockrill and Douglas Goold, *Peace without Promise* (1981) p.169 (M.Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East 1792-1923* (1987) p.326 dates Feisal's understanding to 27 Nov.1919).
[28]Dan Eldar 'France in Syria: The Abolition of the Sharifian Government, April-July 1920', *Middle Eastern Studies*, July 1993, pp.487.
[29]Notes of the meetings are in CAB23/44B.
[30]CAB23/44B, notes of meeting at Downing Street, 19 September 1919, pp.24-25.

even at this late date to acquire a route from Mosul to the Mediterranean.[31] Feisal was aware of the serious implications of the 13 September aide-mémoire and of his exposed position *vis-à-vis* France, and pointed out to Lloyd George how he, 'considered that he himself and the Arab nation were being very badly treated in having a Power thrown on them when it had been promised that they should select for themselves, and he was certain that every Arab would shed his last drop of blood before he admitted the French'.[32]

By this time Feisal's ability to influence by threatening a revolt was diminished. Feisal stressed the trouble that would result from Lloyd George's policy in a letter of 11 October, and in another missive Feisal observed that France was not going to abide by the September aide-mémoire, and the Syrian territory France was encroaching upon was, 'territory where the British Government undertook to establish an independent Arab State, and in accordance with this they handed over the Administration to the Arab Government at the time of occupation'.[33] Having decided to withdraw from Syria, realising that the value of occupation was now outweighed by the strain on resources, Britain's position was eased. The more so as the Egyptian revolt had been quelled, and Lord Milner was on his way to Egypt to determine her future. Britain's urgent need to recall the E.E.F. forces in Syria was outlined by Lloyd George to Feisal in a meeting at Downing Street in September 1919:-

> His Majesty's Government were bringing home troops from every country where we did not intend permanently to remain, e.g.-Archangel, the Caucasus, France, etc. as rapidly as they could on account of the great expense entailed in their maintenance. As the British government saw no prospect of peace being signed with Turkey until February or March of next year...the proposals contained in the Aide-Memoire had been submitted to Clemenceau...To stop in all these places, however, would involve so gigantic a burden on the British taxpayer, that this country would never tolerate it.[34]

The more exact assessment would be that occupation of Syria was not worth-while; if it were a vital matter Britain probably could have found the funds, as she did for India and Egypt, but by September 1919 there was no *raison d'être* to remain in Syria. The argument expounded through this thesis that Britain viewed the Palestine campaign as a means to an end is reinforced as Syria's usefulness to Britain's position was the determining factor in whether Allenby's garrison would

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[31]Hankey papers, 4/11, Hankey to TJ, 9 Sept.1919. That 'TJ' was Thomas Jones see S.Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets 1877-1918* (1970) vol.i, p.339.
[32]CAB23/44B, notes of meeting at Downing Street, 19 September 1919, p.34.
[33]Lloyd George papers, F/59/10/6-7, Feisal to Lloyd George, 11 Oct. & 21 Nov.1919.
[34]CAB23/44B, notes of meeting at Downing Street, 23 September 1919, p.56

be sustained or withdrawn.

To emphasise further the need to pull out there was the fact that continued occupation was doing little to help Anglo-French relations. Nowhere was Feisal's weak position more evident than in his polite discussions with Lloyd George in the autumn of 1919 when he could do little but stress the need for Britain to play fair by the agreements that she had entered into with the Hashemites. Any sense of British propriety had to be weighed against far more pressing concerns and this meant that Feisal was going to have to come to an arrangement with France.

The importance of securing Feisal's acceptance of France's new status was evident in Britain's attempt to use her subsidy to Feisal to influence him to deal with France. Curzon wrote to Allenby on 9 June 1920 that withholding the subsidy was designed to, 'to put pressure upon Feisal to accept invitation of Supreme Council to Europe'.[35] Allenby resisted this attempt to coerce Feisal, and in the same telegram in June 1920 Allenby was told to desist subsidising Feisal, having on one occasion transferred £100,000 to Feisal, 'without authorisation, indeed having been told not to do so'.[36] Allenby continued to send Feisal his subsidy after being ordered to desist because Feisal helped keep order. On 5 June 1920 Allenby wrote to Curzon that if Feisal, 'is kept supplied with money he will be able to maintain a force sufficient to cope with the problem of preserving internal law and order. Whereas if money is not forthcoming his gendarmerie will disappear'.[37]

As in early-1919 Allenby's concern was with maintaining Britain's exposed position in the Middle East, the more so as Britain was not in a position to supply extra troops in an period of withdrawal. Allenby was still concerned, as earlier in 1919, with Feisal's potential for causing trouble. Allenby's worries were perhaps excessive, and ignored Feisal's reliance on British support. In May 1919 Allenby wrote to Henry Wilson that if he withdrew to the line Deraa-Haifa and the Arabs were against the British his right flank around Deraa would be, 'in the air, threatened by all the Druzes and Bedouin tribes'.[38] The events of late-1919 when Britain did withdraw show that Feisal's ability to threaten was not what Allenby believed. However, Allenby's concern at the time was having to contend with a possible revolt at a time when Britain was limiting her garrisons overseas. Comments in Henry Wilson's diary on Allenby's conviction that Feisal would fight the French are borne out by Feisal's eventual stand at Maysalun in July

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[35]R.Butler and J.P.T.Bury (eds), *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, first series, vol. xiii (1963) Curzon to Allenby, 9 June 1920 p.286 (original copy of letter in the India Office library in L/P&S/10/801 file786).

[36]B.Gardner, *Allenby* (1965) p.230.

[37]L/P&S/10/801 file786, Allenby to Curzon, 5 June 1920.

[38]Wilson papers, HHW2/33B/16, Allenby to Wilson, 17 May 1919.

1920. The encounter with Gouraud's French force in July 1920 showed that Feisal's small poorly-trained army was no match for the French, and the Arab force was easily defeated.[39] What Allenby wanted, as did Lloyd George, was for Feisal to come to terms with Clemenceau, as this would prevent Arab discontent which could spill over into parts of the Middle East controlled by Britain. If Feisal could come to a satisfactory arrangement with France this would help assuage any British worries that her Arab ally had been treated unfairly. This was unlikely to happen as with Millerand in power from January 1920 Feisal's administration, bereft of British troops and support, had little power to resist the French, who eventually invaded Syria and deposed Feisal. From the war's end Feisal's most promising ally was probably Allenby who, as the commander on the spot, was more sympathetic to the Arab cause. If Feisal had managed to convince the Greater Syrian Congress that an agreement with the French was the only option, some independent status for Feisal might have been arranged. However, the awarding to France of the Syrian mandate in April 1920 following the San Remo conference compounded Feisal's predicament, and reinforced more radical elements within Syria who rejected any arrangement with France. This rejection made any peaceful settlement almost impossible, and General Gouraud's invasion in July 1920 brought an end to Feisal's short lived régime which had been established by the E.E.F. following the battle of Megiddo. Feisal's ability to negotiate with France was limited as it was unlikely that he could have secured anything more than nominal leadership of Syria.

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General Allenby's actions in 1920 in continuing the subsidy to Feisal when he had been instructed otherwise highlights his focus on military necessity and the maintenance of order as being his dominant concerns. Allenby was being told to delay the subsidy to help London coerce Feisal, but Allenby, aware that control of Syria had not been resolved in early-1919, was concerned not to anger Feisal and the Arabs. Allenby seems to have had a sense of fair play, but his overriding aim was to maintain his garrisons in tumultuous times when there was much unrest and potential for violent discontent in the region. In his correspondence Allenby frequently pointed out the inconsistencies in British policy toward the Arabs, but usually added how the result would be trouble for his occupation force and this suggests the reason why Allenby was more wary of disappointing Feisal. Allenby's emphasis on the trouble that Feisal could cause was exaggerated. This is not to say that Allenby was deliberately inflating Feisal's power, more that with

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[39]Wilson papers, reel 8, diaries, 23 Sept. & 16 Oct.1919. For an outline of Feisal's defeat by the French in 1920 see Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East* (1987) pp.322-327.

his vast range of concerns stretching from Egypt and Sudan through Palestine and up to Cilicia he was chary of any Arab uprising. Lloyd George was influenced by these reports earlier in 1919, but by late-1919 he had no option but to end his support for Feisal. Having done so Feisal's power was shown to be less than imagined, and with the Egyptian revolt suppressed and with Feisal's reliance on British subsidies, his power could be controlled. Derby commented on this in his diary after speaking to Sackville West about the withdrawal from Syria: 'reliefs are going on satisfactorily and that although the Emir threatens to attack every moment still there has been no sign of it whatsoever'.[40] That Feisal was seen as a menace is, in part, explained by demobilisation which made Allenby's task that much more difficult, and those troops left to Allenby were discontented and eager to return home.

Lord Derby, having spoken to Allenby in October 1919, recorded in his diary how he found Allenby, 'very much disturbed at the idea that our garrisons were to be withdrawn in Syria...before being relieved by the French'.[41] Allenby's prime concern on maintaining his command and keeping order is evidenced by the concern that France take over control from the E.E.F. This is a continuation of the discussion of Allenby's contributions to Anglo-French discussions earlier in 1919, where his focus was shown to be immediate and centred on keeping control. The difficult position that Allenby was in, close as he was to any repercussions of decisions made in Paris, was commented on by Lt.-Col. Gribbon in June 1919. Gribbon outlined Allenby's reactive and relatively subordinate position in relation to the political decision-makers in London and Paris, and remarked on the:-

> loyalty of a soldier to his ally [Feisal], whom he is repugnant to let down in any way...We soldiers are all sorry. Sorry that victory has not brought peace. Sorry that our politicians have made impossible commitments to people with divergent interests and desires...it is, of course, unfair that a General should be placed in the position of having to adjudicate between his ally and political commitments which were entered into before his own arrival on the scene.[42]

In making these remarks Gribbon was ignoring that Allenby had dealt with non-military aspects to his command as part of his duties. In the main Allenby focused on immediate military matters, but the analysis in this thesis has shown him to be adept in dealing with the political and imperial context of the Palestine campaign. As has been argued in this thesis, the Palestine campaign

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[40]Derby papers, 920DER(17)28/1/4, diary, 17 Nov.1919

[41]Derby papers, 920DER(17)28 1/4, diary, 28 Oct.1919.

[42]Wilson papers, HHW2/33B/7, comments by Gribbon, 14 June 1919 on letter Allenby to Henry Wilson, 3 June 1919 (*ibid.*).

was not just about defeating the Ottoman empire, but was also concerned to provide for British imperial security. Allenby would have been optimistic to expect to conduct operations in a political and imperial vacuum. If Allenby were fighting in a political void then the implication is that the campaign had no real purpose. Allenby was conducting his operations in a world irrevocably altered by industrialisation and nationalism. Nation states were eager to pursue national ends and the First World War only heightened the awareness that national security was paramount.

The historical evidence available shows that Allenby made a favourable impact on nearly all who met him. Derby recorded in his diary how he overheard the American delegate, F.L. Polk, saying that he was 'tremendously impressed by Allenby', and Polk was struck by the 'absolute straight forwardness of Allenby' which he felt was a great asset in any talks with the French.[43] This reinforces the critical points made on Murray in the Introduction to this thesis. Allenby seems to have been a striking figure; not just physically imposing, but intellectually developed and able to see and react to wider forces behind his operations. Notwithstanding Allenby's withering temper, those who met the man seem, almost universally, to have been very impressed. This strength of character was vital to motivate the E.E.F., and was also essential for dealing with the decision-makers in London. Maj.-Gen. G. de S. Barrow, the commander of the 4th Division under Allenby, remembered how:-

> Haig could not bear contradiction and was intolerant of any opinion — certainly of any opinion on military matters — contrary to his own. Allenby was always glad to listen to other opinions and advice, provided this was backed by knowledge and common sense. What angered him was stupidity, negligence and, most of all, disregard of orders.[44]

General Allenby certainly made mistakes, and this thesis has outlined blunders at the third battle of Gaza and the Trans-Jordan raids. Henry Gullet's note on Allenby is more critical, pointing out how:-

> In any estimate of Allenby as a great General, consideration must be given to his overwhelming force and to the wretched morale and physical condition of the enemy...Allenby certainly made the very most of his opportunity but any general with qualities above mediocre must have won decisive success. Allenby's only claim to rank with the great captains lies in the fact that he exploited his opportunity to its extreme limit.[45]

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[43]Derby papers, 920DER(17)28/1/4, diary, 29 October 1919.
[44]Barrow, *The Fire of Life* (1942) p.46.
[45]Gullett papers, AWM40/77, 'Allenby'.

These comments are too harsh. There were many generals of 'mediocre' grade about, as was shown by Murray's period in charge of the E.E.F., quite capable of achieving less, even of being defeated — as Townshend showed at Kut-al-Amara in 1916 in Mesopotamia. Allenby will not be ranked as one of the great generals of history along with Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Saladin, Marlborough or Napoleon, but neither will he be forgotten as is the fate of many uninspiring commanders. There is not the space here to conduct an analysis of generalship in the First World War, but it is fair to say that many of Allenby's peers were far less adaptable and able to cope with the range of concerns surrounding the Palestine campaign.

This thesis finishes its study in November 1919, but the implications of Britain's victory over the Ottoman empire extended into the mandate period and beyond. By 1921 French rule was established in Lebanon and Syria, and British rule in Palestine with a British run régime in Iraq. This period of Anglo-French rule would end after the Second World War when the Middle East emerged into a period of independence.

CONCLUSION

> I have no papers, only sad memories. (Sir Harry Trusted, entry in St. Antony's College Middle East Centre cardex to request for any private papers.)

In the Introduction to this thesis some preliminary questions were asked about the relationship of the Palestine campaign to British war strategy: Were the operations of the E.E.F. a side-show, and only marginal to the main campaign in France? Did the fighting in Palestine do anything to win the war? Considering the historical evidence analysed in this study the answer to these questions is that the Palestine campaign was marginal in terms of helping Britain win the First World War. Even taking into account the morale lifting capture of Jerusalem, the Palestine campaign was a waste of scarce British resources; a reflection of Lloyd George's amateurish ideas on how the war would be won. Lloyd George's concern that Douglas Haig would destroy the British army in France may have had some basis in fact, but this did not mean that the operations in Palestine formed part of a coherent strategy to defeat Germany.

This is not overly to impugn Lloyd George who was having to decide on strategy at a trying time for Britain when she was under intense pressure on many fronts. It seems unlikely that Lloyd George's political contemporaries would have fared better. The underlying problem was that Britain's war strategy was disjointed, and the civil-military dispute in London outlined in the earlier part of this thesis was a reflection of this unfortunate situation. The result of the squabbling in London was to make unified command and control difficult. If strategy had been properly organised the Indian troops which Allenby ultimately had to accept in 1918 could have been received, and trained, in 1917. Allenby's experienced British and Australian troops could then have been sent to France earlier, and would have helped reinforce Third and Fifth Armies for the first Ludendorff offensive in March 1918. If Allenby had trained his Indian troops before mid-1918 he might then have been able to push forward to Galilee and Mount Hermon by the summer of 1918. The springs by Mount Hermon were vital for the viability of a Zionist Palestine, and with their capture a British-run Palestine could have been established. This achievement might have satisfied Lloyd George's appetite for successes to counter the losses in France, and might have met Britain's imperial need to secure some territorial assets for any peace talks.

Britain's troubled situation was, in part, a product of General Murray's failures at the two Gaza battles in the spring of 1917. These reverses inevitably delayed the third battle of Gaza. Allenby had to settle into his new command and the result was that the capture of Jerusalem was unnecessarily delayed to

December 1917 when the winter rains further hampered operations. This delay carried over into 1918 and into the dispute between Lloyd George and Robertson which culminated in Joint Note 12 and the decision to attack Turkey in 1918. The lateness of Joint Note 12, coupled with the impending German offensives in France, resulted in the Note being ignored. Even without the Ludendorff offensives the analysis in Chapter Three has shown that an attack into Syria was particularly problematic for Allenby. The capture of Aleppo before the complete surrender of the Ottoman empire would have put the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in an exposed and potentially dangerous position.

That Murray was allowed to keep command until June 1917 was a mistake by the War Cabinet in London who should have replaced him sooner. If Allenby, or some other commander of equal calibre, had taken charge before June 1917 Britain might have occupied Palestine by late-1917. The civil-military dispute in London over the Palestine campaign would then have been more easily resolved, and might not have spilled over into 1918.[1]

However, Murray's shortcomings were not the only reason for the fighting in Palestine continuing to the war's end. That the Palestine campaign lingered on was also a result of tactical and operational failures by Allenby. The drawn out nature of the campaign resulted in operations doing little or nothing to help defeat the Central powers. Chapters Two and Four of this study outlined some confusion on the part of Allenby and his staff regarding Turkish intentions and capabilities. Turkish aims were misunderstood, and the least efficacious plans accepted. The third battle of Gaza was the most striking example of the worst plan being adopted by the British, and this contributed to the delay in occupying all of Palestine. There were reasons for Allenby's staff work being, on occasion, rather awry, but the consequent results at the third battle of Gaza and the Trans-Jordan raids are noteworthy. These difficulties served to make an already troubled situation more complicated and less likely to result in a Turkish defeat. The final and complete collapse of the Turks in Palestine had to wait until September 1918. By the battle of Megiddo, Turkey's cause was lost anyway as the Central alliance in Europe was collapsing. Taking into account any deficiencies on the part of Allenby, it was still the fact that even if he had routed the Turks in 1917, or early-1918, the distance of Palestine from the centre of Ottoman economic and political activity round Istanbul meant that victory in Palestine would not endanger the Ottoman government. Turkey was herself pursuing expansionist aims in the Caucasus far to the north of Palestine with the goal of capturing Baku, and her ultimate capitulation was the result of the wider Central powers' surrender in the autumn of 1918.

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[1]It is worth remembering, however, that Palestine was by no means the only area on which civil-military relations floundered.

In a more profound way the Palestine campaign was a failure. In the Introduction another central question posed was: Did the campaign have a political dimension beyond the fighting? It has been shown that Allenby often had to deal with non-military as much as military matters, and this was especially so from September 1918, although political needs were also evident at the third battle of Gaza and the Trans-Jordan raids. Allenby usually managed to put to one side this political and imperial dimension when formulating battle plans, but he still had to accommodate these concerns which revolved around excluding France from Palestine and Syria, and promoting Feisal's Arabs in Trans-Jordan and Syria. The policy of assisting the Hashemites came to fruition at the fall of Damascus, and the orders whereby the E.E.F. avoided the city highlight the political-imperial dimension to the Palestine campaign.

The question that was not asked in the Introduction was whether this need to provide for British imperial security was worth all the effort expended. Taking into account the analysis in this thesis Britain's attempts in this respect seem excessive. Obviously, British decision-makers in 1917 and 1918, worried that the war would continue beyond 1918, and worried that Germany might remain a threat, wanted guarantees of strategic territories in the Middle East. It is important to consider the difficult and unpredictable situation facing British planners in the First World War. It is certainly easier to judge with hindsight than have to make vital decisions, upon which people's lives depended, with partial and uncertain information.

Taking this into consideration it would seem that Georges Clemenceau would probably have acquiesced in many of Britain's demands in the Levant even without Allenby's occupation of Syria and his subsequent establishment of Feisal in Damascus. The discussion in Chapters Six and Seven outlined Clemenceau's relative disinterest in Syria. It seems that Clemenceau's eventual stand over Syria in the spring of 1919 was based more on personal annoyance and pride than any purely strategic calculations. Clemenceau was undoubtedly very irritated by Lloyd George's uncompromising attitude over Syria. France's attachment to Syria was more sentimental than strategic and this was reflected in Clemenceau's concessions in December 1918. This was misunderstood by British decision-makers whose perception was that the O.E.T.A. system was vital as a means of making sure that Britain's aims were realised. Britain's rather obsessive concern with imperial security can be contrasted with France's more lackadaisical attitude in this respect. Without Feisal's presence in Syria it is arguable that the French would have been more stubborn over Mosul and Palestine. Allenby's victory, coupled with Feisal's position as an ally, helped to cover all contingencies, of which there were many at the war's end.

However, the attempt by Lloyd George to secure the region round

Tadmor pushed Clemenceau too far, and the French leader's anger came to the fore in the May 1919 meeting convened to discuss the Syrian impasse. The events of September 1919, discussed in Chapter Eight, were a direct consequence of Clemenceau's stand against Lloyd George earlier in the year. As Tadmor was going to stay in Syria there was no reason to maintain the E.E.F. garrison in Syria. In September 1919 Lloyd George decided to withdraw Britain's Syrian garrison for a number of reasons. There were the domestic financial and popular constraints which worked against excessive overseas commitments. The French press campaign and Clemenceau's obvious unwillingness to make further concessions on Syria's borders reinforced the need for Britain to withdraw from Syria.

That France by the autumn of 1919 had had to force Britain from Syria did not augur well for Feisal. If Britain had acted as honest broker for Franco-Arab negotiations earlier in 1919 France might have been more agreeable toward the Arab régime in Damascus. However, France's need to secure some colonial compensation for her war-effort meant that an independent Arab state in Syria was unlikely to be tolerated and this state of affairs faced Feisal with a Hobson's choice. Clemenceau's relatively friendly relations with Feisal ended with Alexandre Millerand's coming to power in January 1920. Had Britain withdrawn support for Feisal earlier than she did then Clemenceau and Feisal would have had more time to settle their differences. In the final analysis Feisal was reliant on British support and without it his power to negotiate with France was limited.

Britain's uncertainty as to when the First World War would end was a deciding factor in the need to promote the Palestine campaign. As has been shown, the campaign did little for the defeat of Britain's enemies, but for long-term imperial security Allenby's operations were more vital. That Germany's collapse was more total and sudden than expected should not be forgotten; that Germany would remain a threat influenced the planning within the War Cabinet in the last two years of the war. That Britain was also using Allenby's operations to exclude France shows a degree of foresight and contingency planning, the more so considering the intensity of the fighting in France. Discussing the significant events surrounding Allenby's operations at the fall of Damascus, Elie Kedourie observed that it, 'was of course Anglo-French rivalry in the Levant which explains these extraordinary incidents of 1918'.[2] In saying this Kedourie ignores the concern that Britain had over a continued Turco-German threat in the region, but he is undoubtedly right to concentrate on the realisation that France, as much as Germany, could represent a post-war threat for Britain in the Middle East. Compared to France Britain ended the war in a far more advantageous

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[2]E.Kedourie, 'The Capture of Damascus, 1 October 1918' in Kedourie, *The Chatham House Version and other Middle-Eastern Studies* (1984) p.47.

position with regard to having territorial assets and negotiating flexibility. Leo Amery's concerns, outlined in Chapter One, lay behind the need to occupy, either directly or by proxy, strategically significant areas in the Middle East. Had Germany remained a threat the Palestine campaign would have made more sense for giving Britain added power, for with German forces still in France occupation of any parts of the enemies' lands was vital. Occupied territory could be used as bargaining assets in any peace talks, but they could also be of long-term benefit if it was decided that they were needed to secure the British empire. These considerations were ones discussed by British decision-makers, and lie behind any complete study of General Allenby and the campaign he conducted in Palestine from June 1917. General Allenby's campaign was certainly Clausewitzian, although whether the political end aimed for was worth the energy expended is not readily apparent as one looks back on the Palestine campaign. Considering the imperfect knowledge during the First World War of current and future events the Palestine campaign seems more sensible; a normal reaction by decision-makers to the vagaries of war, and the fear that the fighting would end without Britain having secured her essential desiderata.

In the Introduction another question posed was whether the Palestine campaign was an *ad hoc* affair, or whether it was carefully thought-out and structured to achieve British occupation of the Middle East. Considering the evidence from this thesis the Palestine campaign, while having many extemporised and incoherent moments, had as a driving force something more organised and planned: something with a definite end.

Britain should have ended her attempt to secure Tadmor once it was realised that France was unwilling to concede the oasis. While securing Tadmor was based in a real concern over imperial communications, and of the need to obtain a workable land route across the Syrian Desert to Mesopotamia, this aim was simply not attainable considering French opposition and geographical difficulties. The Anglo-French negotiations in 1919 surrounding Tadmor and the Yarmuk Valley were pointless. These talks show how Britain pushed Allenby's successes too far, and can be contrasted with the more clever use of Britain's victory in Palestine up to December 1918. The secret December 1918 arrangement was the high point of Britain's power, and the subsequent talks in Paris over Syria were not fruitful. Britain wanted to obtain benefits far beyond what was possible; benefits which ignored France's needs to secure some colonial compensation for her war losses. This ignoring of French sensibilities was nowhere more evident than in Lloyd George's uncompromising stance in his talks with the French in the spring of 1919. In the discussions in 1919 Lloyd George was influenced by the threat of a revolt led by Feisal, but his concern to take Tadmor indicates that his main concern was national interest, and not truly

assisting Feisal to establish an Arab government in Syria. The disorder in the Caucasus region only served to make British decision-makers more cautious and desirous of covering all eventualities. This did not lend itself to a rapid withdrawal from Syria, especially as the Russian Civil War continued and the future of the Bolsheviks seemed uncertain.

It is also worth pointing out how tired decision-makers would have been by 1919. Four years of war was followed by intense and wide ranging negotiations, and the answer to why some policies were pursued is perhaps to be found in a desire to reach any conclusion which would allow delegates to adjourn from meetings and relax. Personal fatigue was an added factor in the decision-making process which by the summer of 1919 had pushed Curzon to the verge of a nervous breakdown.

Any complete assessment of the value of the Palestine campaign needs to look beyond 1919 and into the mandate period. This study ends in November 1919, but Allenby's victories, and General Marshall's in Mesopotamia, allowed Britain to turn Palestine, Trans-Jordan and Iraq into British preserves. Palestine and Iraq were seen to be vital for the empire, the more so as the oil at Mosul was a critical energy source. Britain's 'moment' in the Middle East lasted until after the Second World War, and during the fight against Nazism the region was again of great strategic importance.[3] The retreat from empire following the Second World War resulted in the independence of the states whose formation and boundaries this thesis has touched upon. Events subsequent to 1945, such as decolonisation and the establishment of Israel in 1948, have irrevocably changed the political make-up of the region. While the events outlined in this thesis form the basis for the contemporary Middle East it is possible that the battles and political decisions from 1917 to 1919 have been overtaken in importance by later wars and political upheavals.

This thesis has examined military operations in Palestine, and has explored the relationship of Allenby's campaign to wider political and imperial concerns. It may be, as Kedourie observes, that nothing remains today of these events: 'Nothing but whatever satisfaction the historian feels when, out of the confusion and the inexactitude, the distortions, the garbled reports and the surviving fragments, he makes for himself a coherent intelligible picture'.[4]

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[3]To borrow Elizabeth Monroe's phrase from her *Britain's Moment in the Middle East: 1914-1956* (1963).

[4]E.Kedourie, 'The Capture of Damascus, 1 October 1918' in *Chatham House Version*, p.47.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1
Composition of the Northern Arab Army

'Throughout 1918 the Arab Northern Army was constituted according to certain clear commands. First there was the Regular army under General Jafar Pasha al-Askari, with two weak brigades of infantry, a Camel Corps battalion, a battalion of mule-mounted infantry and eight guns.

Secondly, there was a British and Egyptian Section under Lieutenant-Colonel Pierce Joyce, with the Hejaz armoured-car battery, a company of the Egyptian Camel Corps, a detachment of machine-guns from an Indian cavalry regiment, the Transport and Labour Corps, and a wireless station at Akaba. To these were added a French-Algerian pack battery of four mountain-guns under a fiery Frenchman, Captain Pisani, and some machine-guns.'

From Lord Birdwood, *Nuri as-Said: A Study in Arab Leadership* (1959) p.60. See Eliezer Tauber, *The Arab Movements in World War One* (1993) ch.5 for a more detailed breakdown of the Arab army.

APPENDIX 2
The Comments of Sir Harry Chauvel

i) The comments of Sir Harry Chauvel (commander of the D.M.C.) on Lawrence and the capture of Damascus are important for any reader interested in understanding the controversy surrounding the events 30 September-3 October 1918 when the Turkish forces left the city and the E.E.F. and the Arabs moved in. Chauvel produced two reports after the war detailing the events as he saw them. The first report comes with a letter to Allenby (dated 22 October 1929) and is dated 8 October 1929 and is comments on chapter drafts of the *Official History.* In this letter and report Chauvel is angry at what he sees as excessive acceptance of Lawrence's view from *Revolt in the Desert.* With this report are some notes for General Godwin (Chauvel's B.G.G.S.) and a report entitled 'Meeting of Sir Edmund Allenby and the Emir Feisal at the Hotel Victoria, Damascus, on Oct.3rd, 1918' and is dated 22 October 1929.

ii) Then on 1 January 1936 Chauvel wrote to the director of the Australian War Memorial with comments on *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, and again enclosed the report on the meeting at the Hotel Victoria in Damascus which Allenby went to (although this version is an abridged version of the copy sent to Allenby in 1929). The report sent with the letter to the director of the A.W.M. is dated 31 October 1935 (as is the abridged comments on the hotel meeting).

iii) Chauvel's son-in-law wrote to A.J.Hill (completing a biography of Chauvel) on 20 June 1968 concerning Chauvel's feelings towards Lawrence, and said Chauvel felt Lawrence had lied to him over who should have been appointed vali (governor) of Damascus following its fall.

Copy of i) in: Allenby papers, 2/5/16-17 (see appendix 4).

Copies of ii) in: Australian National Archives, Canberra (ACT), A5954:988/4 (in which there are also some relevant letters from Chauvel in 1939); Allenby papers, 7/4/1; Allenby hanging file (at St. Antony's College) and AWM27/113.31[1] (see also AWM27/113.31[2]).

Copies of iii) in: Lawrence papers (IWM), ref.122 Chauvel k59490 and Mitchell Library Sydney, ML Doc1344. (Interested readers should also look at the letter from Chauvel on Lawrence (to Bean) in Bean papers, AWM38/3DRL/6673/item 505, 12 July 1935.)

There is also a version of events given by Chauvel at a 1923 Romani Dinner speech and is in Chauvel papers (see Hill, *Chauvel*, p.342).

APPENDIX 3
Evidence of Aim to Install Feisal in Damascus

Letter Lt.-Col. Alan Dawnay to Lt.-Col. P.C. Joyce. Dawnay would seem to be in Cairo, whilst Joyce was Allenby's representative with Feisal (see Akaba papers I/M20, Alan Dawnay to Joyce, 27 May 1918, p.2 for confirmation of Joyce as Allenby's representative). The beginning of this (hand-written) letter is missing, as is the date, but it is before the fall of Damascus, and possibly after 19 September when the battle of Megiddo began. Jeremy Wilson (*Lawrence of Arabia*, p.1102) says that this letter dated 20.9.1918.

The Chief is sending instructions to Feisal in the form of a letter amplified by covering instructions to yourself, which I will enclose in this [no copy here]. The points are only three: (1) he wants the railway south of Deraa smashed, as completely as you are able to smash it, in order to eliminate that flank for once and for all; (2) he wants the tribes to close the gap across the Yarmuk valley between Lake Tiberias and Deraa, which may be used by parts of the 8th AC from the Amman area & by remnants of other troops who succeed in making their way across from West of Jordan. (3) Above all he does NOT wish Feisal to dash off, on his own, to Damascus or elsewhere--we shall soon be able to put him there as part of our operations, & if he darts off prematurely without Gen. A's knowledge and consent, to guarantee his actions, there will be the very devil to pay later on, which might upset the whole apple cart. So use all your restraining influence, & get Lawrence to do the same, to prevent F from any act of rashness in the north, which might force our hand, & in the wrong direction. The situation is completely in our hands to mould now, so F. need have no fear of being carted, provided he will trust us & is patient. Only let him on no account move north without first consulting General Allenby;--that would be the fatal error.

From Akaba papers, I/M11 (at LHCMA). (Jeremy Wilson has this letter in *Lawrence of Arabia: The Authorised Biography* (1990) p.549.)

APPENDIX 4
The Meeting at Hotel Victoria 3 October 1918

Meeting of Sir Edmund Allenby and the Emir Feisal at the Hotel Victoria, Damascus, on Oct. 3rd, 1918. Copy of Record Written by Lt.Gen. Sir H.G. Chauvel on 22 October 1929.

I got a message on the afternoon of the 2nd October, from the Chief of Staff to say that the Commander in Chief would visit me on the following day (October 3rd), would arrive at Damascus at 1 o'clock and wished to stay at the Hotel Victoria.

On the early morning of October 3rd, Lawrence informed me that the Emir Feisal would arrive at Damascus that afternoon and that he wished to have a triumphal entry, at 3 p.m., galloping in like an Arab Conqueror of old at the head of about 300 horsemen. Seeing that he, Feisal, had had very little to do with the 'conquest' of Damascus, the suggested triumphal entry did not appeal to me very much but, having in view the fact that the Arabs were to have the administration of the City, I thought it would not do any harm and gave permission accordingly.

Later on, on the morning of the 3rd, I got a further message from the Chief of Staff to say that Sir Edmund Allenby would not stay the night at Damascus as he wished to get back to Tiberias on the night of the 3rd, and would therefore have to leave Damascus on the return journey not later than 3 p.m.

Accompanied by my B.G.G.S., Brigadier-General C.A.C. Godwin, I motored to Kaukab to meet Sir Edmund. On meeting him I asked him if I had done right in agreeing to Shukri Pasha being Governor of Damascus. Sir Edmund told me I had done quite right but there were some complications in that the French were to have the Mandatory power over Syria and that he wanted to see Feisal at once. I told him that Feisal would not be in until 3 p.m. when he was to have a triumphal entry. The Chief said 'I cannot wait till 3. You must send a car out for him and request him to come in and see me at once. He can go out again for his triumphal entry.'

Accordingly, on arrival in Damascus, I despatched my A.D.C., Captain W.G.Lyons, in my own car to meet Feisal, with a note explaining the circumstances and asking him to come in in the car. He did so, arriving at the Hotel Victoria about 2.30 p.m. and there was a conference at once at which the following were present: Sir Edmund Allenby, General Bols, myself, General Godwin, The Emir Feisal, Lt-Col Lawrence, the Sherif Nasir and Nuri Bey* (* There were others present i.e., Stirling &, I think, Cornwallis but I did not record them [Cornwallis hanging file, Cornwallis to Wavell, 17 May 1939, Cornwallis says he was not at the meeting].)

The Chief explained to Feisal:-

(a) That France was to be the Protecting or Mandatory Power over Syria.

(b) That he, Feisal, as representing his Father, King Hussein, was to have the Administration of Syria (less Palestine and the Lebanon Province) under French guidance and financial backing.

(c) That the Arab sphere would include the hinterland of Syria only and that he, Feisal, would not have anything whatever to do with the Lebanon, which would be considered to stretch from the Northern boundary of Palestine (about Tyre) to the head of the Gulf of Alexandretta.

(d) That he was to have a French Liaison Officer at once, who would work for the present with Lawrence, who would be expected to give him every assistance.

Feisal objected very strongly. He said that he knew nothing of France in the matter; that he was prepared to have British assistance; that he understood from the Advisor that Sir Edmund Allenby had sent him [Lawrence?] that the Arabs were to have the whole of Syria including the Lebanon but excluding Palestine [Monroe notes the fact that Feisal agreed to give up Palestine in a letter to Allenby's nephew on 29 September 1965 in Allenby papers, 2/5/18]; that a Country without a Port was no good to him; and that he declined to have a French Liaison Officer or to recognise French guidance in any way.

The Chief turned to Lawrence and said: 'But did you not tell him that the French were to have the Protectorate over Syria?' Lawrence said: 'No Sir, I know nothing about it.' The Chief said: 'But you knew definitely that he, Feisal, was to have nothing to do with the Lebanon'. Lawrence said 'No Sir, I did not'.

After some further discussion the Chief told Feisal that he, Sir Edmund Allenby, was Commander in Chief and that he, Feisal, was at the moment a Lieut-General under his Command and that he would have to obey orders. That he must accept the situation as it was and that the whole matter would be settled at the conclusion of the War. Feisal accepted this decision and left with his entourage (less Lawrence) and went out of the City again to take on his triumphal entry which I am afraid fell somewhat flat as the greater bulk of the people had seen him come in and out already!

After Feisal had gone, Lawrence told the Chief that he would not work with a French Liaison Officer and that he was due for leave and thought he had better take it now and go off to England. The Chief said: 'Yes! I think you had!', and Lawrence left the room.

The Chief afterwards relented about Lawrence and told me to tell him that he would write Clive Wigram about him and arrange for an audience with the King, also, that he would give him a letter to the Foreign Office in order that he might explain the Arab point of view.

[There are now three paragraphs dealing with problems over Beirut]

From Allenby papers, 2/5/17.

APPENDIX 5
William Yale

In 1910 Yale graduated from Yale University. He then joined school of Standard Oil Company of New York (SOCONY). 1913 sent to Ottoman Empire and 1914 in Palestine where he meets T.E. Lawrence, L. Woolley & S. Newcombe. 1914-17 in Ottoman Empire and then 1917-18 Special Agent

of the United States State Department with Allenby's E.E.F. Goes to Paris Peace Conference 1919 and then to the Middle East June-July 1919 with the King-Crane Commission. Yale was undoubtedly an important figure being America's Middle East expert. After the war he severed his connection with SOCONY and took up an academic career writing *The Near East: A Modern History.* The Yale papers are at the National Central Archives, Washington and the Yale University Library (according to the 'Source' guide in Kedourie's *England and the Middle East* (1987) p.214) and the copies this author consulted are at St. Antony's College Middle East Centre in Oxford. Yale's remarks about the hospital situation are peculiar in that he points out how Clayton as Allenby's Political Officer deliberately prevented supplies going to the hospitals, but Yale seems not to want to draw the logical conclusion: that the Turks suffered as a result of British *realpolitik.* Yale goes to great lengths 'to state that I had and have the highest respect and admiration for General Allenby as a soldier and as a man. I came to have a high regard for Clayton and Cornwallis their intelligence and their integrity. Likewise I have a deep feeling of gratitude to such officers under Allenby's command I had dealings with.' (Yale papers, box 1: file 1, comments on *Secret Lives*, 17 Sept. 1968, p.7.) Yale's politeness obfuscates as to Clayton's political activities that helped cause the Turks' suffering; activities which Yale acknowledged.

APPENDIX 6

Anglo-French Declaration, 7 November 1918

(The date is sometimes given as the 5th, 8th or 9th November.)

The object aimed at by France and Great Britain in prosecuting in the East the War let loose by the ambition of Germany is the complete and definite emancipation of the peoples so long oppressed by the Turks and the establishment of national governments and administrations deriving their authority from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous populations.

In order to carry these intentions France and Great Britain are at one in encouraging and assisting the establishment of indigenous Governments and administrations in Syria and Mesopotamia, now liberated by the Allies, and in the territories the liberation of which they are engaged in securing and recognising these as soon as they are actually established.

Far from wishing to impose on the populations of these regions any particular institutions they are only concerned to ensure by their support and by adequate assistance the regular working of governments and administrations freely chosen by the populations themselves. To secure impartial and equal justice for all, to facilitate the economic development of the country by inspiring and encouraging local initiative, to favour the diffusion of education, to put an end to dissensions that have too long been taken advantage of by Turkish policy, such is the policy which the two Allied Governments uphold in the liberated territories.

From J. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East* (1956) p.30. There is a slightly different version in G. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (1945) p.435 which has been translated from the French.

APPENDIX 7

Matthew Hughes, 'Australians and the fall of Damascus, 1 October 1918, *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, April 1995 (copy attached).

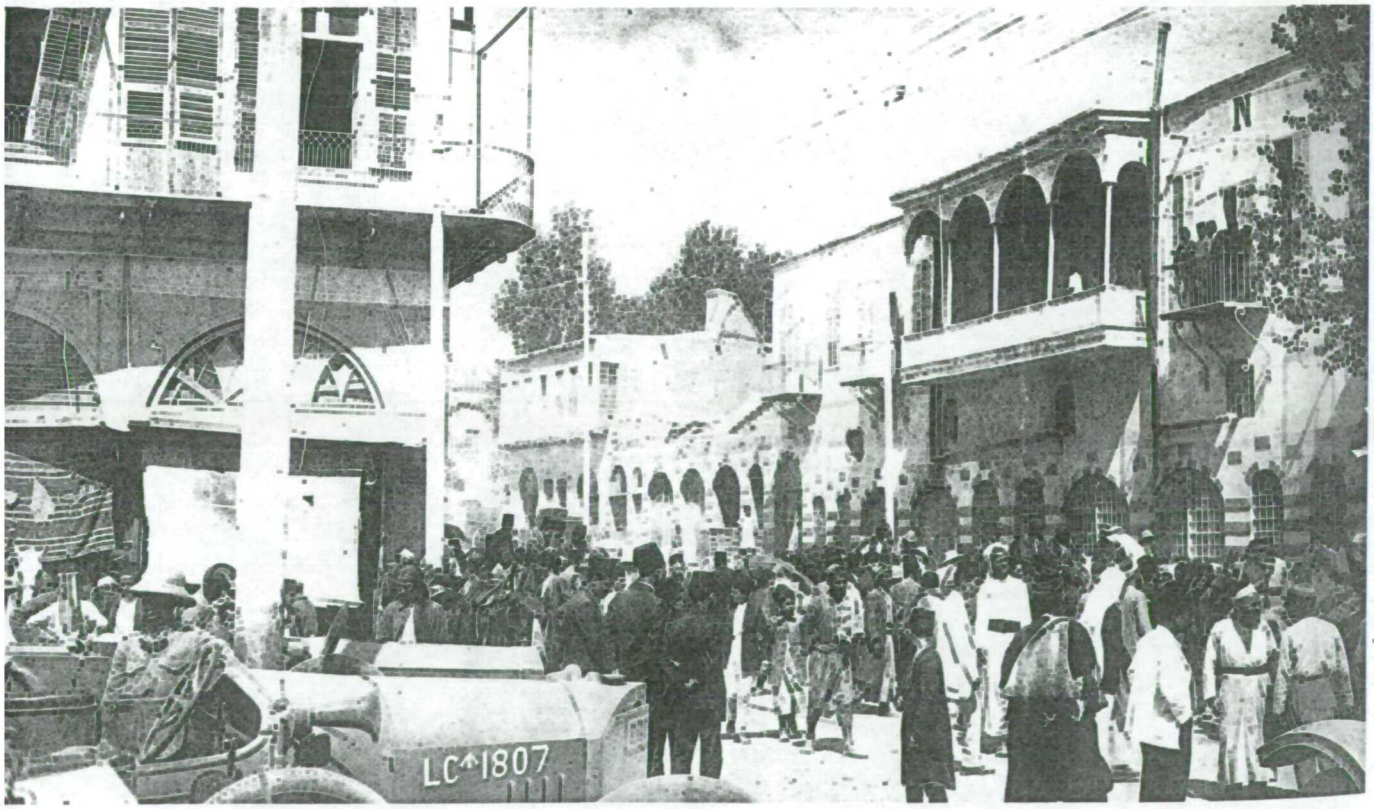
Australians and the fall of Damascus, 1 October 1918

MATTHEW HUGHES *Kings College London*

Australia's sacrifice at Gallipoli has come to symbolise her involvement in the first world war. Anzac Cove, however, was not the only part of the Levant where Australians contributed to fighting the armies of the Central powers. In Palestine the Australian Light Horse, actually mounted infantry, provided the Egyptian Expeditionary Force with a well-trained and dependable core. The Australian Light Horse spearheaded the crossing of the Sinai, and in 1917 mounted their famous charge to take Beersheba at the third battle of Gaza.[1] After fighting in the Trans—Jordan raids in early 1918, the Australian Light Horse crowned its part in the Palestine campaign by fighting at the battle of Megiddo in September 1918, and then capturing Damascus, the capital of Syria, on 1 October 1918. The purpose of this article is to show that the Australians were the first into Damascus, and that the reason why this has not always been recognised is to be found in the politics surrounding the Palestine campaign, whereby Britain was attempting to promote her Hashemite Arab ally, Prince Feisal, by giving him Damascus. This article will also make some comment on the effect on Turkish wounded left in Damascus of the decision to allow the Arabs to administer the city.

* * * * *

The Palestine campaign had a political dimension as well as a military one. Under the Sykes—Picot arrangement of 1916, Syria and Mosul were to pass into a French zone of influence after the war. Palestine was to be internationalised. Soon Britain saw that the 1916 agreement was, to say the least, inconvenient. So the 3,000-strong Northern Arab Army of Prince Feisal, operating on the extreme right of the General Edmund Allenby's Egyptian Expeditionary Force, was to be allowed to take Damascus to help Britain exclude France from Syria. This shows the Clausewitzian aspect to Allenby's campaign: military operations, once commenced, were tailored for a political and imperial end – to give Britain more clout at the Paris Peace Conference, and to help provide for the long-term stability of the British Empire.



Damascus street scene on 3 October 1918, the day General Edmund Allenby and the Sheik of Mecca entered the city. There seems little doubt that the British Government sanctioned Allenby's swift recognition of the Arab provisional government in Damascus. (AWM J01013)

Journal of the Australian War Memorial 26 (April 1995) pp. 26-37

l's pre ence a ı ted Britain in her attempt to plan for a l noencies in post war n>g ti tions

'he Australian M unted Division was one of the three lry divisions with the 4th and 5th Indian in Lieutenant :ral Harry Chauvel's Desert Mounted Corps, und>r ıby's supreme command, which rode toward Damascus the victorious battle of Megiddo. Two of the three .des in the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division also Australian. The Australians were ordered on to ascus from 25 September 1918 as the Turkish rout after iddo became apparent.-

'hat day, one of Allenby's senior staff instructed British ers operating with Feisal to tell him there was 'no objection our Highness entering DAMASCUS as soon as you .der that you can do so with safety'. Feisal's army proved ıle to take the town on its own, so the Egyptian :ditionary Force cavalry had to 'secure all hostile ıaches', but 'avoiding the town if at all possible. Every ıution should be taken to prevent troops entering the '.[4] As the Australian Mounted Division and the 5th Indian ıion pushed up onto the Golan Heights, an element of entered the proceedings. A 'special instruction' to the ralian Mounted Division on 29 September read:

> /hile operating against the enemy about DAMASCUS ıre will be taken to avoid entering the town if possible. nless forced to do so for tactical reasons, no troops are ı enter DAMASCUS. Brigadiers will ... picquet all roads om their areas into the town to ensure this order being ırried out.'

he Australian Mounted Division exhausted itself trying mply with the order. It attempted to cross the Barada e west of Damascus and to pass the high land to the north erdict the road to Homs, in order to get around the city. ıperational difficulties forced the Australians through ıscus as dawn broke on 1 October; the rough terrain and lebris from the retreating Turks, caught by the Australians e defile of the Barada Gorge, impeded the attempt to mnavigate Damascus. As the tactical narrative of the 'alians recounts, 'orders had been received that no troops to enter DAMASCUS unless absolutely forced to do so', ıg: 'After a thorough reconnaissance the 3rd Bde found the hills north of DAMASCUS were impassable for lry and st.rted to push down the Beirut Road towards IASCUS.' It 'was not the policy to enter DAMASCUS ıould be helped', and the 3rd Australian Light Horse ıde, under Brigadier General Wilson, 'tried to pass by IAR to HOMS road'; but 'it was found that further ıce across the m untains was impossible ... 1 Oct 0500 3rd Australian Light Horse Bde pushed through gorge ·ds DAMASCUS '

'ilson slipped elen ents of his brigade through the city on the morning of 1 October. He was followed later in .orning by 'Bourchier's F rce', two regiments of the 4th 'alian Li_ht Horse Brigade According to Henry Gullett, 'ficial hist rian of Australians in the Palestine campaign, ıustralian M unted Division was ordered 'to reach ıscus on the 2nd [of Oct.ber] but they travelled so fast ... arrived by the 1st. There was no reason why Ausdiv sh u d not have r a h>d D m cu at le ı t 24 h urs e rli>r It seemed as th u•h Chauvel or GHQ was afraid to venture Ausdiv al ne into the D mascus area '* Chauvel's f ar was perhaps not simply the shatter d remna ts of the Turks f.cin• him, but had something t do with waitin_ for the N rthern Arab Army; Chauvel seems n t to have known fully of the policy for allow ng Arab admin strati n of D m s us, d the task of establishing Feisal in Damascus was down to the Ar b Bureau officers attached t the Northern Arab Army. One was T E. Lawrence, later fam us as 'Lawrence of Arabia'.

Following the Australians into Damascus were elements of the 5th Indian Division c ming up from Daraya. Major Wheler commented that his division had marched the length of the city on 1 October but this should not have happened as 'orders had arrived from the Desert Corps to say that the first entry of the allied troops into the city of Damascus would take place next day, October 2nd'. This caused some consternation in the 5th Division and Wheler was told 'not to mention the previous day's entry'.[9] The 4th Indian Division was under similar orders. The instruction from the Desert Mounted Corps to the 4th Division was that: 'HEDJAZ regulars are to be allowed to enter DAMASCUS'. The war diary of the 29th Lancers in the 4th Division describes how Damascus was surrounded and that: 'No troops were however allowed in the town during the day'.

When Olden's Australians passed through Damascus as dawn broke on 1 October they stopped at the town hall:

> Major OLDEN - then asked for the civil Governor and was told he was upstairs. Major OLDEN then dismounted and went into the town hall, here he found a large assembly of notables and people in uniform, as if arranged for some public function. EMIR SAID was sitting in the Municipal chair. Major OLDEN asked for the Civi Governor. EMIR SAID arose and came forward as such and shook hands. Through an Interpreter EMIR SAID said:- 'In the name of the Civil P pulation of DAMASCUS I welc ome th e British Army.'

Emir Said of the Kadir family was seen as pro-French and hence was not Britain's choice as governor, a post earmarked for a representative of Feisal. Thus the acceptance by the Australians of the surrender of Damascus from Said had to be ignored and a suitable pro-Hashemite governor installed. T E Lawrence was already in the town, and reported back to GHQ· 'On arrival at the Serai [town hall] Shukri Pasha el Ayoubi was appointed Arab Military Governor as all former civil employes [sic] had left with Jemal Pasha'.[4] Shukri was second choice, as Rikabi Pasha, an Ottoman officer in charge of the defences of Damascus, had gone out to meet Major General Barrow commanding the 4th Division, and was therefore temporarily unavailable. B th Shukri and Rikabi were retainers of Feisal and suitable f r the post of governor. Lawrence had visited Damascus in June 1917 to 'make arran_ements with promine it members of the Freedc m Committee in Damascus for the action to be taken when the Turks were fin ally expelled', and on this trip he also met R kabi Pasha. With Shukri's appointment Lawrence be_an the process of replacing the Kadirs, whose representative, Said, had surrendered Damascus to the Australians.

Chauvel m tored into Dama cus on the mornin f l ɔb r and 'met Lt Col Lawrence .. with an official whom ntroduced to me as the M litary Governor (SHUKRI HA)'. On the 25 S ptember 1918, Chauvel had asked nby 'What about the e Arab ? There i a rumour th t are to have the administration of Syria'. Allenby t ld to work through Lawrence 'until Lord Allenby came t ıascus which would be as soon as po sible after its ure'. [8] The War Office instructed Allenby on 1 Oct ber r policy should be to encourage the setting up of either ral, local or regional Arab administration, as the case may ınd work, at least ostensibly, through them entirely'. This uction was from the Foreign Office, and passed through War Office It ind cates how the Arabs could be useful for ain: 'it is important that the military administration should estricted to such functions as can properly be described as tary, so as to give to no inconvenient claim where ecessary of French civilians'. [9] The Chief of the Imperial eral Staff cabled GHQ on 1 October: 'On your arrival at MASCUS you are authorised by HM Government to hoist Arab Flag there'. On 3 October at the Hotel Victoria in ıascus, Allenby gave Feisal the administration of Syria. nby was having to do the bidding of London.

Allenby wrote to his wife on 3 October: 'He [Feisal] will over the administration of Damascus...His flag now flies Damascus'.- In his book on the Arab Bureau, Bruce trate remarks: 'Allenby's swift recognition of the Arab visional government on the heels of Damascus's fall ıinly suggests that this policy had official sanction', adding the 'scope of Britain's advantageous position was not lost olicymakers in London'.- Phillip Knightley and Colin ɔson's comment on Allenby's feelings about the politics ıe campaign rings true: 'he hated the intrigue in which ical considerations sometimes involved him'.- Archibald ell, a staff officer with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. would rise to high command in the second world war. es a similar point about Chauvel, writing that Lawrence zled and troubled Chauvel ... who was not prepared to with delicate political problems'. [4]

Feisal had won a political victory, but not a military one. e was no conceivable way that the 3,000 'imperfectly ed' troops of the Northern Arab Army could have f ught etreating Turko German units without the strength f Egyptian Expeditionary Force. The commander of the 3rd ralian Light Horse Brigade, Wilson, reported that until ird Brigade had completed its passage through the city, ing the only remaining available exit for the enemy, n ıber of the SHERIFF'S Army was visible in any part of ity within view of this Brigade'. [6] The Sherifian force. h had followed the success of the Australians and Indians. aken 'no part in the actual taking f the city', Ma or Whe er l: 'they were too far away on Oct ber 1st, and did n t the town till 24 hours later'.

* * * * *

thr ugh Dama cus the Egyptian Expediti nary F rce s lry was carefully bivoua ked n rth and ea t f the city. ickets put out to 'prevei t all troc ps ex ept SHERIFIAN ılars from ent rin g th city' Ord r were is u d n the n ed to stay out of th city with a strict pa s system enforc d to prev nt Egypt an Exp dit onary Force soldiers entering Dama cu Allenby tel graph d the Chief of the Imp rial General Staff in Lond n on 1 October 2359 hrs that 'all troops . have been withdr wn from th town' This order was not surpri ing cons d ring that 'General Allenby was authorised on 1st O tober [2310 hrs] to allow the Arab flag to be hoisted at D mascus' Th s comm nd was brought up in a reply by Lord Cecil to a question by Theodore Taylor, a Liberal MP, in the Briti h Parliament on 31 October 1918 [3]

Handing control of Damascus to the Arabs gave them a task which, as Gullett correctly points out in the Australian official history, 'would have taxed the capacity of a Western Power accustomed to managing the affairs of great cities.'[3] The instruction to stay out of Damascus had to be ignored when the Arabs proved unable to keep order Repeating the mayhem at Dera'a to the south, where looting and killing occurred as the Arabs moved in, Damascus by 2 October was suffering from lawlessness.[34] Chauvel had to march his cavalry through and the 'turbulent city was instantly awed into silence'.[35] After the war, Chauvel remembered how with his march through on the 2 October: 'The effect was electrical'. Others have written: 'the Bazaars were opened and the city went about its normal business.' [6] Lawrence, according to Alec Hill, Chauvel's biographer, opposed Chauvel's march through Damascus, adding: 'As soon as he [Chauvel] was made aware of Lawrence's tactics he readily accepted Captain Hubert Young's [with the Arab Army] advice to take over Djemal Pasha's house and to quieten Damascus by a quick show of force.'[37]

Lawrence had recommended that Chauvel establish his headquarters in the British Consulate, but Captain Hubert Youn g 'advised Chauvel not to take over the British Consulate, because by doing so he would define the British as allies of the Arabs and not the undisputed controllers of Damascus... The point was not lost on Chauvel, who also decided, despite Lawrence's opposition, on a show of force and marched through Damascus'. [5] These differences indicate that while British policy was to allow Feisal to control Damascus, officers such as Lawrence operating far from home were having to extemporise. Lawrence's francophobia contributed to his eagerness to establish the Arabs, but this should not detract from the fact that he was carrying out British imperial policy. Chauvel's pride in his troops' achieven ent also played a part in the dift cu ties he had in recognising Lawrence's duties. The fact was that Chauvel and Lawrence had different duties at Damascus' fall.

To help Feisal, although presumably not to be too obtrusive, a squadron of the Australian Light Horse was ordered 'to be placed at the disposal of the Sherifian Authorities'. However, ma nten ce of law and order was still sacrificed, as Gullett pointed out in the Australian fficial history in 1923·

> The situat n at Da ascus was ne unpara leled in warfare T ue t tsc n p t vith Fei a and i n ring the d smay and the pr tests f the capable Chr tians, the British G eri n ent, thr u h the C mmand r- n Chief, handed ov r t e adn ii strati n f t e great city to the Arabs imn ed ate y n its captu It is true that many f the Arab civil ser t ts en p yed by the Turks ren a ned th r offi es, t d t th e s n e were ɔf ient n en But

'The turbulent city was instantly awed into silence' when Lieutenant-General Harry Chauvel's Desert Mounted Corps marched through Damascus on 2 October 1918 to quell outbreaks of lawlessness. Colonel T.E. Lawrence opposed Chauvel's action. (AWM B00313)

> the strong guiding hand in the affairs of the city had been the Turk's, and during the war the organising genius of the Germans had been the decisive factor.[40]

Lieutenant Alec Kirkbride, a British officer with the Arab Army, backs up the Australian account in his book, *A crackle of thorns*: 'The police ... had ceased to function and there was political objection to calling in the British troops, who were camped on the outskirts of the town, and so admitting that the new Arab administration was incapable of controlling its own people.'[41]

Lieutenant Colonel Kinahan Cornwallis, who became the political officer in Damascus after the war, and who was present at the fall of Damascus in 1918, wrote in 1919: 'it must be confessed that our policy in the past is calculated to increase our difficulties in the future. During the war, admittedly for opportunistic reasons, we greatly encouraged the Arabs and allowed them to retain a sense of their own importance and efficiency which was scarcely justified by facts'. Cornwallis added: 'on our occupation of Syria the same policy was continued. An Arab Administration was installed and left to work out its salvation with practically no control from higher authority.'[42]

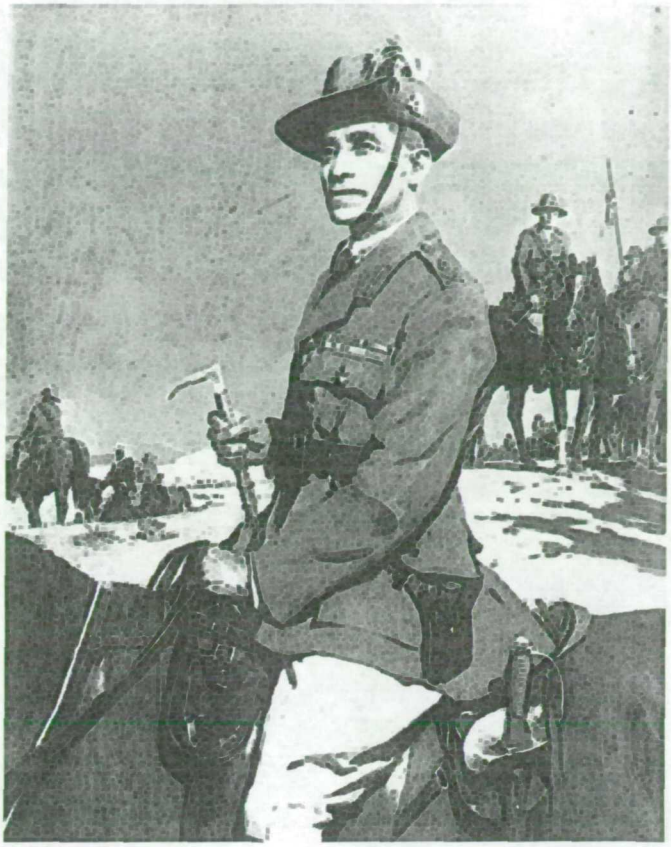
The consequences of getting Feisal into Damascus as soon as possible were unpleasant for Turkish wounded left in the city. Medical units of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force were ordered to stay out of Damascus.[43] The result for the Turkish wounded left behind by their comrades is outlined in the war diary of the assistant director of medical services of the Australian Mounted Division : 'Condition of 6-700 patients in this hospital [Hamidieh Barracks] was found on inspection to be indiscribably [sic] hideous and inhuman. Deserted by all save a handful of Turkish medical personnel, starved for three days, and suffocated by the stench of their own offal and the unburied dead, the plight of these wretches was more than miserable.'[44] William Yale, America's liaison officer with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, corroborates the assistant director of medical services in a letter written in 1968, where he remembers the plight of the Turkish wounded.[45] In his account Yale points out that British policy was: 'to allow the Arab military forces and the local municipal Syrian leaders to assume responsibility for governing the city and maintaining law and order'. An Australian officer showed Yale the hospital and said that he 'had asked authority to supply their [the Turks'] needs and had sufficient supplies to do so. He said he had been ordered not to do so. He said he would probably be court martialled if I reported his conversation with me.' For Yale the 'ghastly heart rending sight'[46] of the hospitalised Turks was something he never forgot: 'Nothing I did during the whole world war period do I regret so deeply and with such shame as my failure to use my position wisely and calmly to alleviate the atrocious suffering of these eight hundred men'.[47]

William Yale informed Brigadier General Gilbert Clayton, Allenby's chief political officer, of the conditions in the hospital:

> I told Clayton that something must be done at once to feed and care for those poor devils in the hospital. I said it was ghastly hypocrisy to talk about German atrocities in Belgium while allowing eight hundred Turks, sick and wounded, to starve to death. Clayton was a cold, hard, self-controlled man upon whom my emotionalism had no effect. Quite indifferently he said to me, 'Yale your [sic] not a military man'.[48]

auvel and Lawrence had different duties at Damascus's fall', resulting in differences of opinion between the two officers.

lonel T.E. Lawrence, British adviser in the Hedjaz Army, in ab dress. (AWM B02170)



W.B. McInnes
Lieutenant General Sir Harry Chauvel *1938*
oil on conavas. 129.1 x 104.5 cm (AWM 13521)

Yale does say that Clayton had not seen the hospital, but conclusion points the real finger of blame: 'I am convinced [Clayton] did nothing because of political reasons, not shing the English to interfere in the affairs of the Arab ministration of Damascus'.[49] This excuse can have provided le succour for the wounded and sick Turks who were left h 'no food, no nurses, human shit ankle deep'.[50] While ab irregulars looted the hospitals, the new Arab ministration did do its best to establish order, but the Arabs not have the logistical backup to cope with the Turkish spitals. It was to Chauvel's credit that he reoccupied the rkish military hospitals after four days' Arab military control the Turkish wounded were receiving no care. The stralians, headed by Colonel Rupert Downes, then set about ting the death rate from seventy to fifteen a day.[51] Britain s a party to articles 4 to 20 of the 1907 Hague Convention the treatment of prisoners, so the business over the hospitals s unfortunate.

istory rewritten

e war diary of the 10th Australian Light Horse Regiment scribed the elation of all ranks on being the first into mascus and how Emir Said had been made governor on 30 ptember by Djemal Pasha, commander of the Turkish Fourth my, who left with the retreating Turks. But the claim that isal was first to enter Damascus quickly became historical fact, for to manipulate successfully the Sykes—Picot agreement the circumstances surrounding the fall of the city had to be changed. The War Office communique of 3 October announced that: 'At 6 a.m. on October 1 the city was occupied by a British force and by a portion of the Arab Army of King Hussein'.[52] *The Times* of 17 October reported that 'the Arab Camel Corps formed the extreme right of the Allied advance upon Damascus, which was entered on the night of the 30th, Arabs being the first troops in'.[53]

The Australian commanders knew better. In Wilson's 1929 account on the fall of Damascus he remembered that 'if there were in fact any Arabs from his [Lawrence's] force [in Damascus], they sneaked in there as civilians, and did not show themselves as enemy in arms', adding: 'I cannot from our experience with the Arabs imagine that 4000 of them would voluntarily come within range of 15,000 armed Turks and Germans'.[54] Harry Chauvel was concerned to make sure that his troops got the credit he felt they deserved; he was angry when Lawrence claimed in *The seven pillars of wisdom* that the Arabs had taken possession of Damascus before any Egyptian Expeditionary Force troops had entered the city.[55] Chauvel's and Lawrence's post-war accounts of the campaign seem to be talking about different things; it was as though they were arguing past each other. Lawrence had reasons for leaving things out of *Seven pillars of wisdom*, not least because

(cont. p.35)

. fr r f 3

n l French rapprochement c193 ce t d t l t
e t t nd di r t u r w n wr t r of w rtim ev nt in
time Ch uv l h d n h r tr int He r n b r d
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hey w re th fr t n T fir t th n aln t th t La r nc
o me when I et hin at tl Serai, not an hour afterwards,
that the wh le city was f ll of Indi n troops which he
ght was inadvisab e '
imes Edmonds, the Brit h official hi t rian of the first
l war, knew the truth. In 1929 he rea sured C.E W. Bean,
ustral an official h st rian, that he knew that

e capture w s ent rely due to Bri Gen r l Wi n. It
ill be emphasised that 5 instead of 10, Arabs c
erated. As to the administration of Damascus, n thing
said in the history the B tish hist ry e cept that Lord
llenby, in accord n e with h s instructi ns, all wed an
rab Administrati n t be set up, and that it was
experienced There seem s no object in en pha i ing its
c mpetence

et the initial c btuscation had done its work. In 1960, for
ple, one l ist n in c uld still write that 'On 30th Septen ber
four hundred years of Turkish rule came to an end... At
the next day, Arab troops c f the Emir Feisal's army ...
ied Damascus.'[5]
E. Lawrence's part in establishing Feisal in Damascus
overstated. In an article in *The Time* s in 1919 concerning
itley and Simps n's just published *The secret lives of*
nce of Arabia, Peter Hopkirk remarked how: 'Lawrence
ibia, far from chan pioning Arab freed m w s instead
ng p werfully behind the scenes trying to establish Briti h
l of the Middle East'. The 'revelations' of Knightley
impsc n's b ck rath r obscure the fairly straightforward
al aims of Britain in 1918, and Lawrence's relatively minc r
Repl ing to H pkirk's article, Jc n Kin che pointed ut.

hat is so surprisi , alm st incredible, is that your
ttribut r, Mr H pkirk ... and the a thors of the Secret
es of Lawrence sh uld be ast nish d that T E
wrence was 'w rk ng powe fully ..to estab sh British
tr l of the M ddle East' After all, Lawrence was an
icial f t e Britis G vernm ent wh se publicly decl red
icy w s just that wh t else were L yd Ge r e, Bulf r,
lner, Sykes Sm ts H rth and La rence d ri g at
time *

wrence's task in the headv days of Damascus' fall was
ly to keep Austral in tr op out f D n scus, but also
e sure that other 'pretenders' to rule Syria were put to
Lawrence was e er t re ove the K dir br thers n t
e of so ne pe so whim b t bec use th s was es ential
implementat n f Brit sh p licy Th threat t Feisal
rom th e A er n Kadr f r ly w h d been res dent
n sc s sinc Abd el Kad r was exiled t Syria by the
in th 19th c nt ry E Ked ur e p t d o n t h
eview of Br an Gard ner's b k *A cr l* : 'Lawrence's
tow rds th Jaz'irs the Kad r ster t ed fr m t
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Sim pson qu te the u ill r v ew of Ahmed Q dri En ir S id
and Abd l Kad r v r n t n ti n list w rking with F l
. tl ey w r working with the Ott man Go ernm t and wer
in t u l w t l F W n Lawr nce expr ed d r t
d po e then I a reed ' Jean Pich n backs th s up in *Le*
p nta e l Pr l O ent 1938 : 'Les Brittan ques r fu nt
alors de reconnaitre le gouvernment provisoire franc phile qui
s'etait const tue a D m s so s la pr sid nce de l'em r Said
Abd el Kader, et ils laissaient l emir Faiçal se proclamer chef
de la Syrie ind pend nte.'[6] R de Gont ut Biron al p nts
to the pro French tendencies of Emir S id which resulted in
his exile to Anatolia earlier in the war.[64] The francophile
disposit on of the Kadirs was not new: during the 1910 Kerak
uprising the Kadirs had ent spies south to investigate for the
French under the cover of checking on French nuns in Kerak.
The French report sent back to Paris on 10 December 1910
referred to the Kadirs as 'nos emirs'.

* * *

Lawrence was carrying out his duties in uncertain and
tumultuous times at the f ll of a great city Lawrence fitted his
actions in neatly with British political aims for Feisal. But in
the need to estabi sh the Arabs so as to maintain ar d pr n te
British imperial interests in the Middle East, the hard work of
the cavalry after the battle of Megiddo has been overlc oked.
Not just Australian mounted infantry, but Indian and British
cavalry sq adrons exhausted themselves to occupy Ottoman
territory that Britain had no long term intention of occupying.
Australian troopers who had survived the long slog across the
Sinai and the cavalry cl arge th t c ptured Beersheba di d in
the final two m nths of the war. Even sadder to c nsider is
the fact that the v ast majority of deaths came about from
malaria, endemic behind Turkish lines. The men of the Light
Hc rse were that m ch more susceptible to m laria because of
their exhaustion advancing on Damascus Indeed many
Australians who recovered from malaria only had a temporary
respite as they tock the di ease back with them to Australia
and died at a later date Their exhaustion was a result of their
strenuous efforts to do their duty and carry out their orders.
As Alec Hill observes: 'if it [Australians' being the first into
D mascus] is a m tter of n n ilit ry importance, [it was not
with ut significance to th c men wh had bc in the l ng m rch
fr m the Canal two nd a half ye rs b fore.' The Austral ans'
success was used to establish Br tain's Arab ally, Feisal, in
D n sc s The p l tics f this act sh uld n t ob cure t e
efforts of the men of t e Light Horse, and neither sh uld the
Au tralian f ght g th usands of m les fr m h me be
f rgotten. However, perhaps the last word sh uld be for the
Turk sh w unded wh s ffered gre t hard h p as a result f
Briti h *Re p t k* wh ch, it w ud seem pr vented t er bei z
pr perly l ked after

Endnotes

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4. Ibid., advanced descorps to GHQ, 26 September 1918 and advanced descorps to GHQ, 28 September 1918.
5. Australian Mounted Division, special instructions to accompany GA70 from Major Chisholm for general staff Australian Mounted Division to rest of division, 29 September 1918, WO95/4551, PRO. (See also WO95/4473, Desert Mounted Corps, September 1918, appendices [GA99] and [GA147].)
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7. 'Report on operations of Australian Mounted Division during period 18 September to 4 October 1918', by Hodgson, separate September to October 1918 file, p. 10, WO95/4473, PRO.
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9. George Wheler, 'The capture of Damascus in 1918', *The Cavalry Journal*, July 1935, p. 447.
10. Advanced descorps to 4th Cavalry Division, Desert Mounted Corps, war diary appendices, WO95/4473, PRO.
11. War diary, 4th Cavalry Division, 11 Cavalry Brigade, 29 – Lancers, 1 October 1918, WO95/4514, PRO.
12. The CO of 10 ALH (Todd) was weak from a wound. He rejoined in time for Megiddo, but by the time Damascus was reached, Olden, the 2i/c, was in command.
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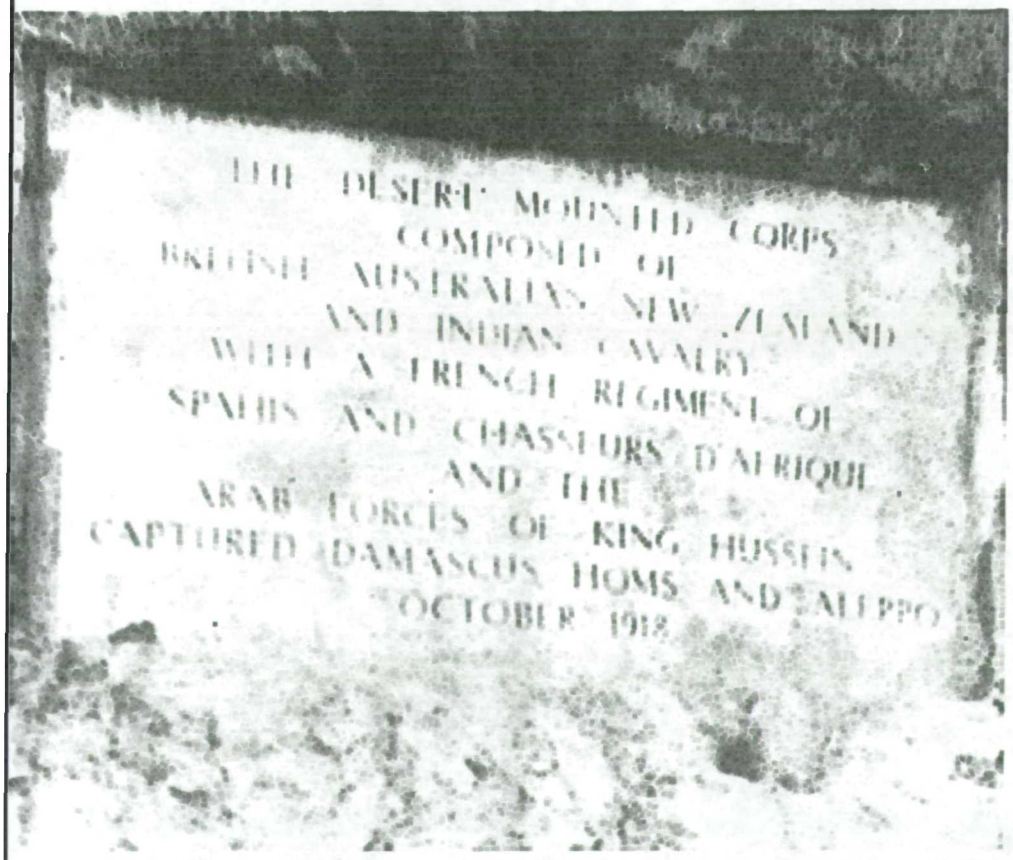

An inscription on a rock face in Syria, still preserved, grants the Desert Mounted Corps the achievement denied them in many historical accounts of the fall of Damascus. (AWM J06091)

d Li ht Hor e Brig de rep rt on occupati n f Dama cus',
Bri adier Gen ral W l t, 25 Oct ber 1918, WO9 4473.
) mber to Oct ber s par te f le, PRO
iel r Maj r, 21 t Lan er , 'The capture f Dam cu in
8 , l c. cit , p 448
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.ober 1918, 11 hrs, WO95 4514, PRO.
scipline in Da a cu ', Au tralian Mounted Divi i n,
eral staff, 4 Oct ber 1918, WO95 4551, September file,
end ces
enby to Tro pers, in war diary of general staff, operati n of
Q EEF, WO95 4371, 1 15 October 1918 file, PRO
itish Hansard, 31 Oct ber 1918, 110 HC Deb 5s, col.1640
cretary of State for F reign Affairs [Cecil] to Theod re
lor). The order was rece ved by the EEF at 2310 hrs in
)95 4371, 1-15 10 18, GS [Ops] EEF GHQ, cable from
opers [CIGS] London in WD 1 October 1918, 231 hrs .
.ve not been able to discover why he a ked this pertinent
stion.
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looting (and killing of unarmed Turks by Arabs) at Dera'a
George de S. Barrow, *The fire of life*, London, Hutchinson,
2, p. 211; for the anarchy which followed on from the
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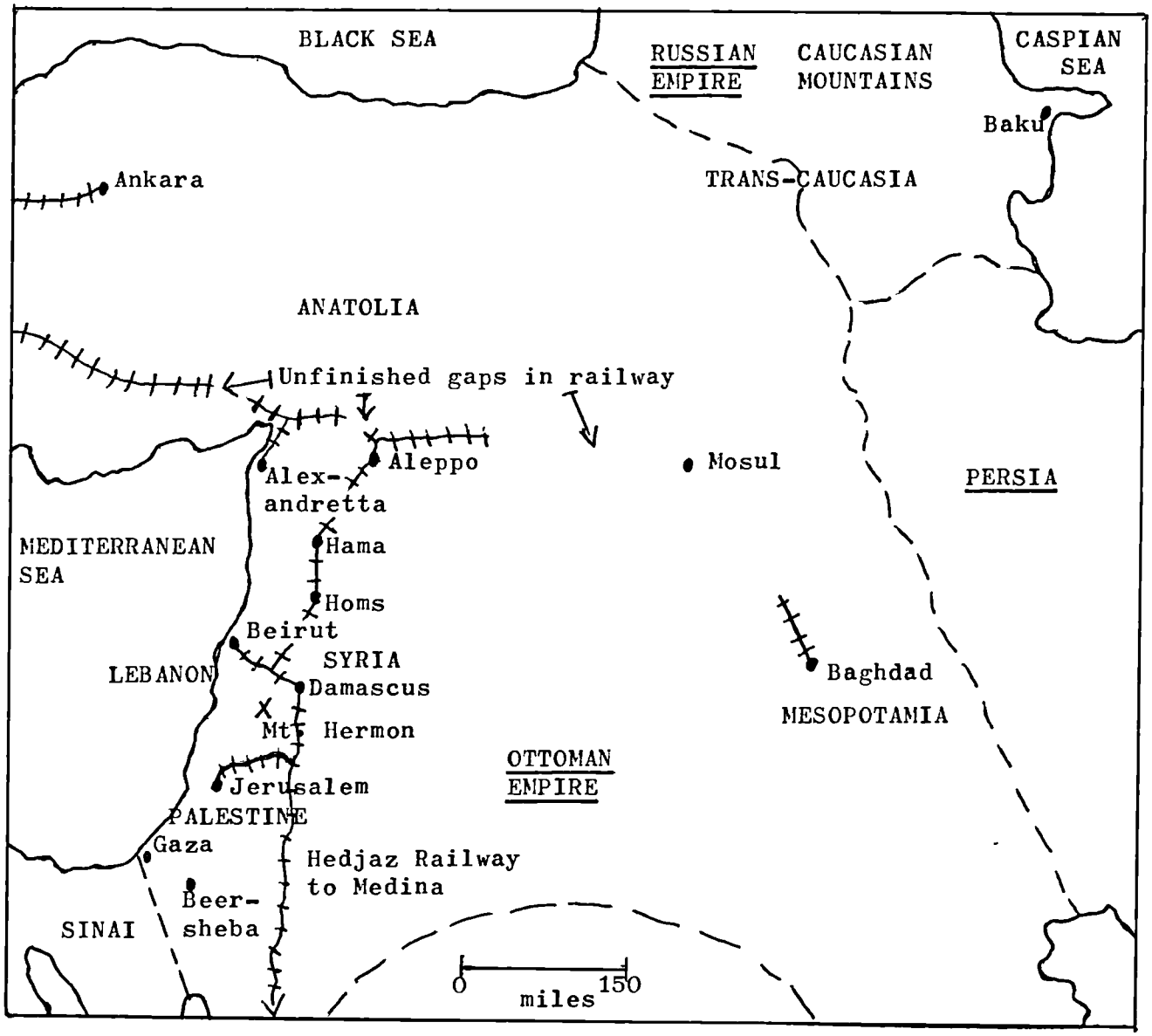
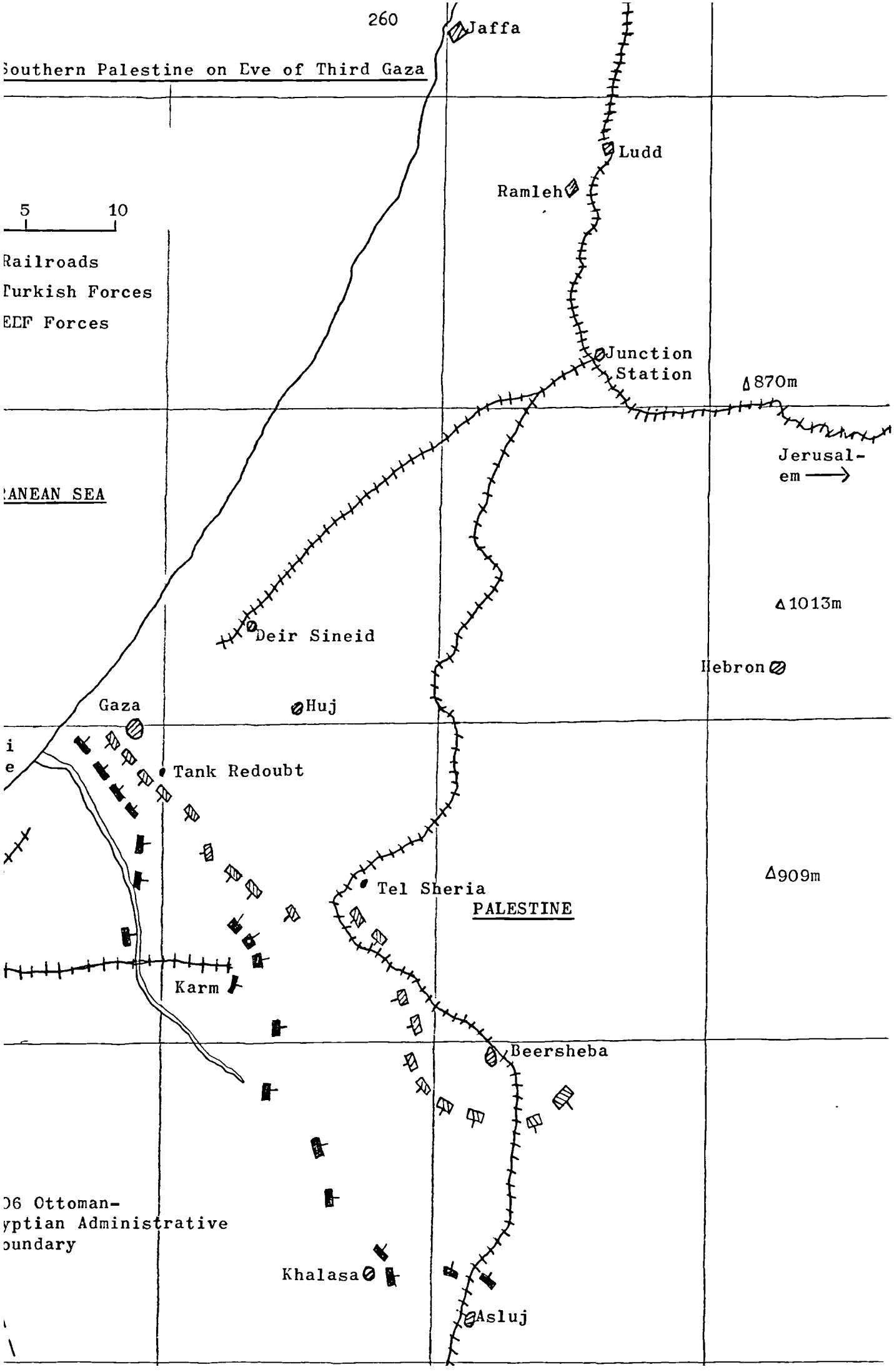
THE MIDDLE EAST, 1914-1918




Jaffa
Southern Palestine on Eve of Third Gaza
Ludd
Ramleh
5
10
Railroads
Turkish Forces
EEF Forces
Junction Station
870m
Jerusalem
ANEAN SEA
1013m
Deir Sineid
Hebron
Gaza
Huj
Tank Redoubt
Tel Sheria
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909m
Karm
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06 Ottoman-
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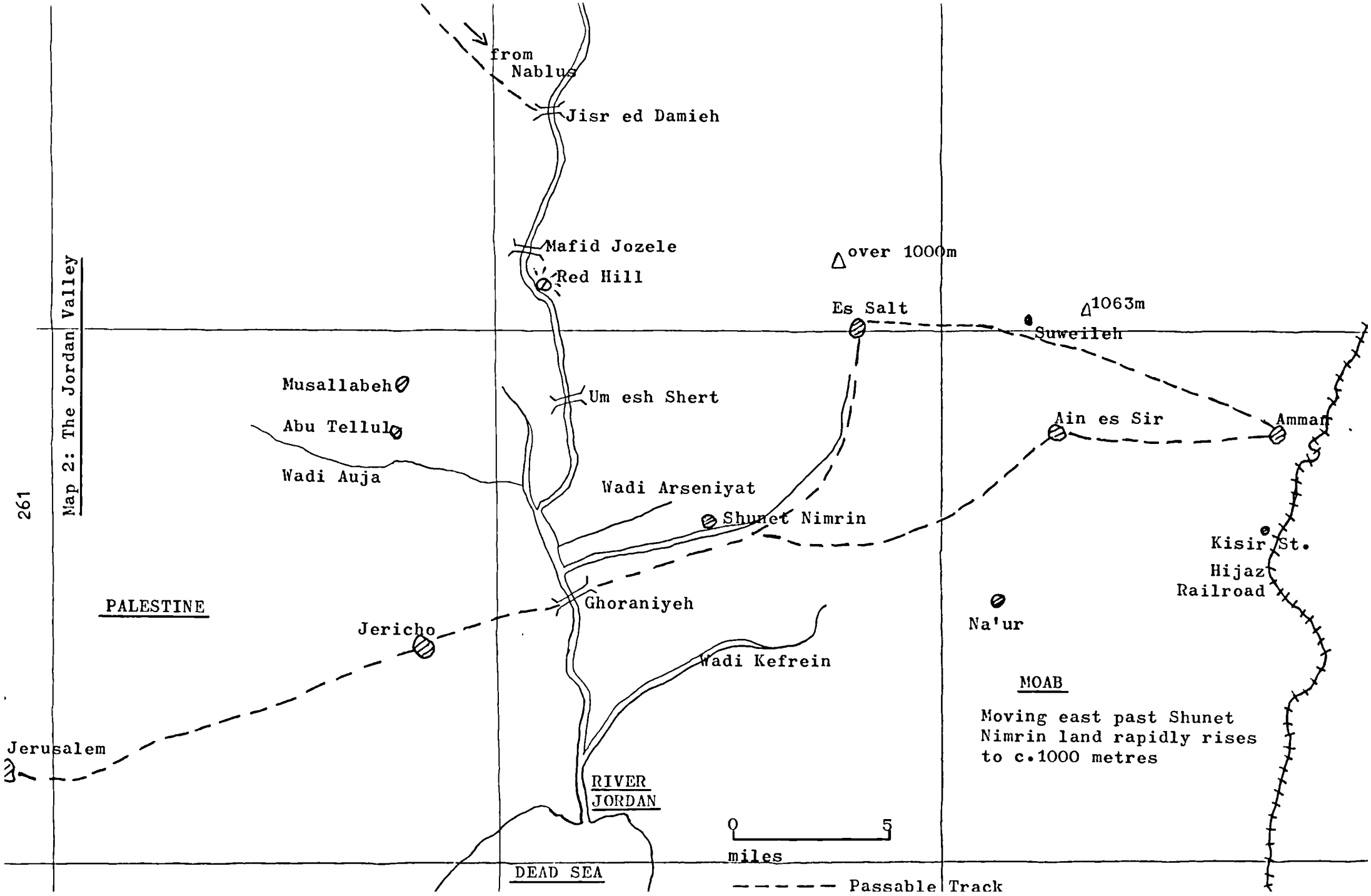
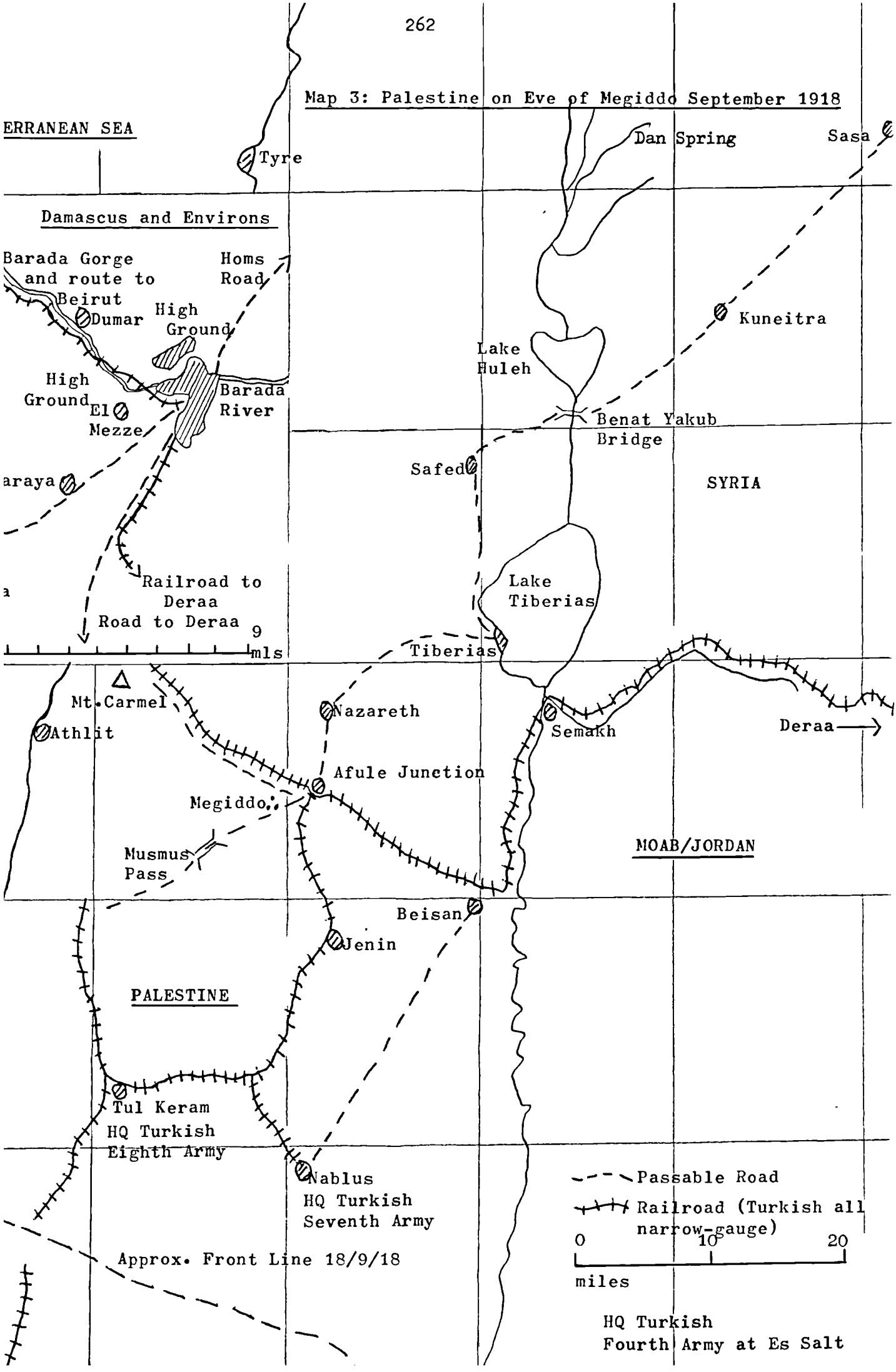
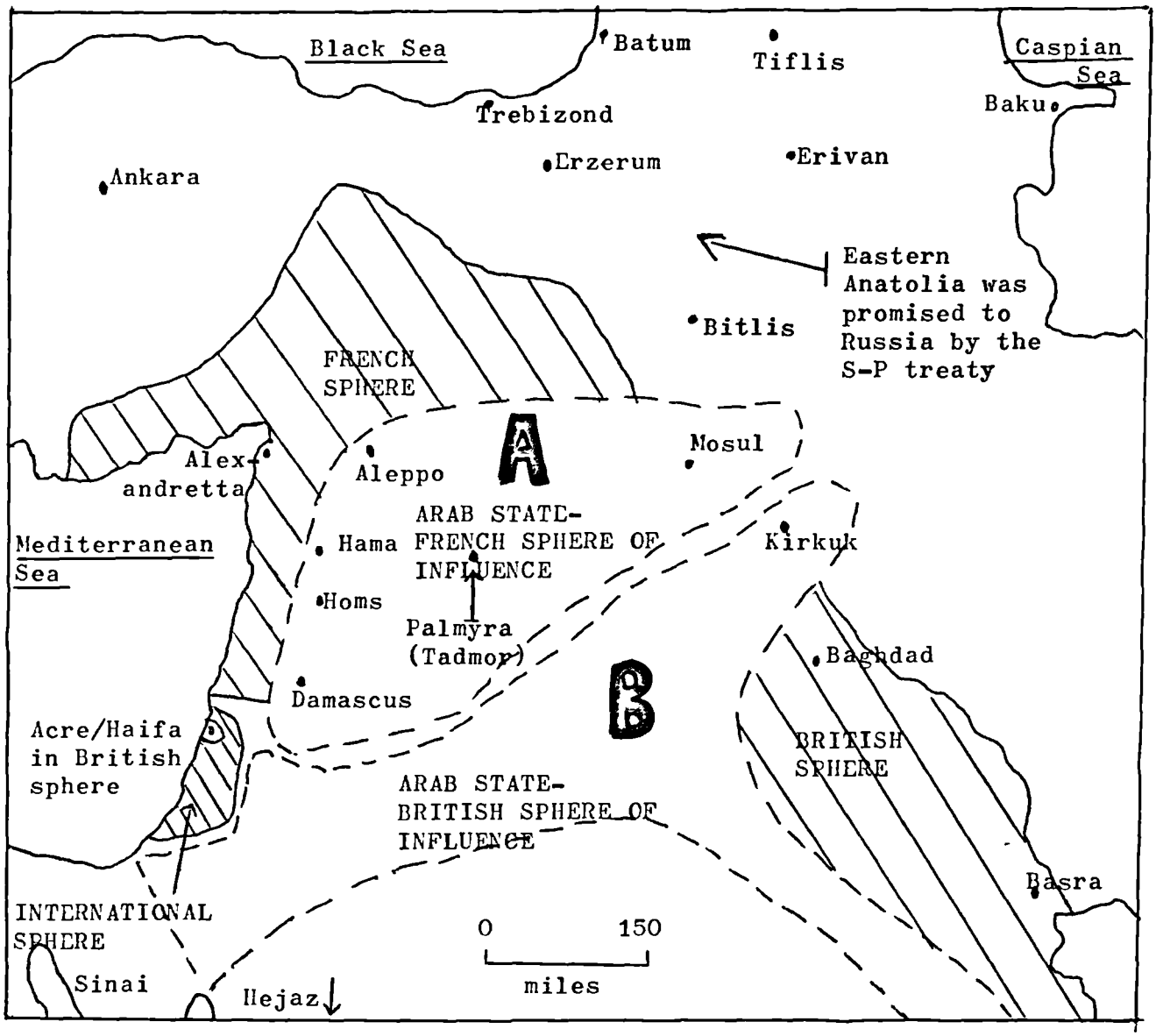
Map 2: The Jordan Valley



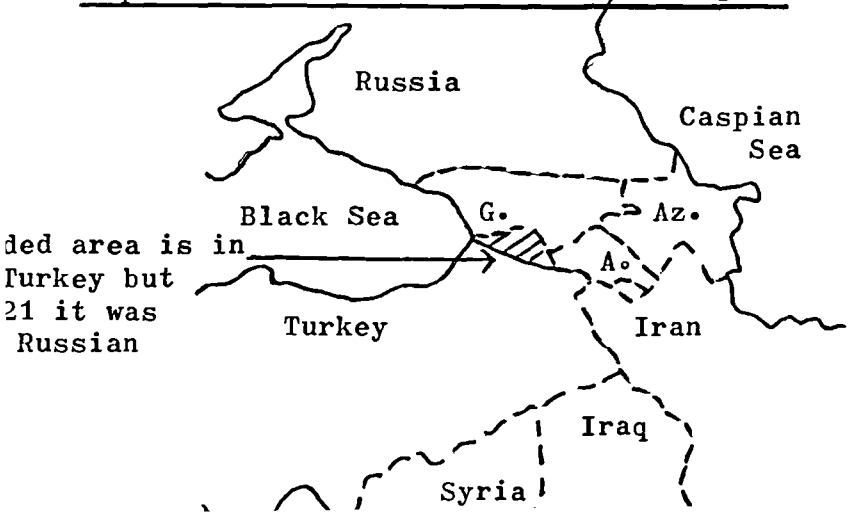
Map 3: Palestine on Eve of Megiddo September 1918



Map 4: The Partition of the Middle East as Devised in the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916

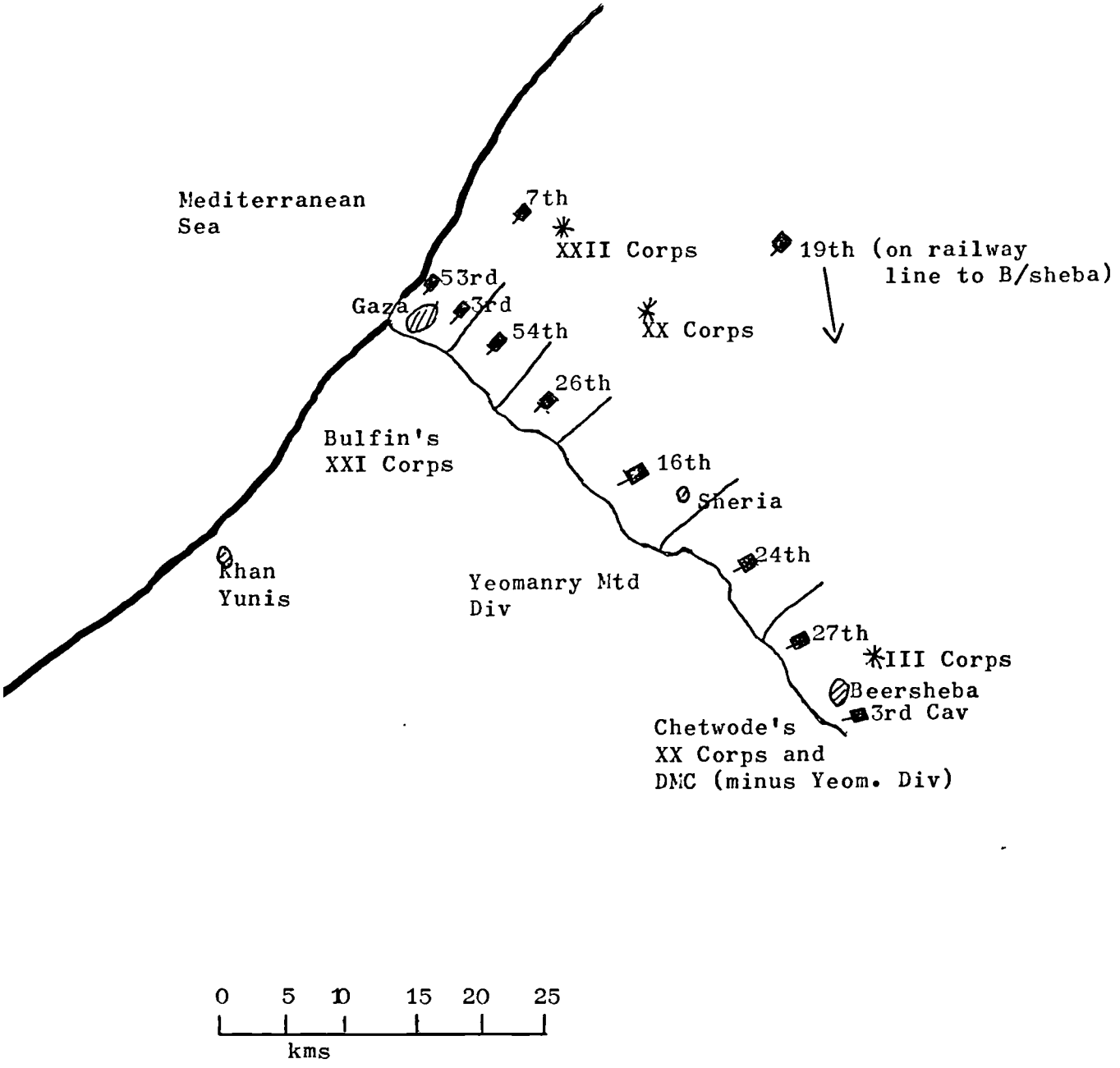


Map 4a: The Modern Trans-Caucasus Region



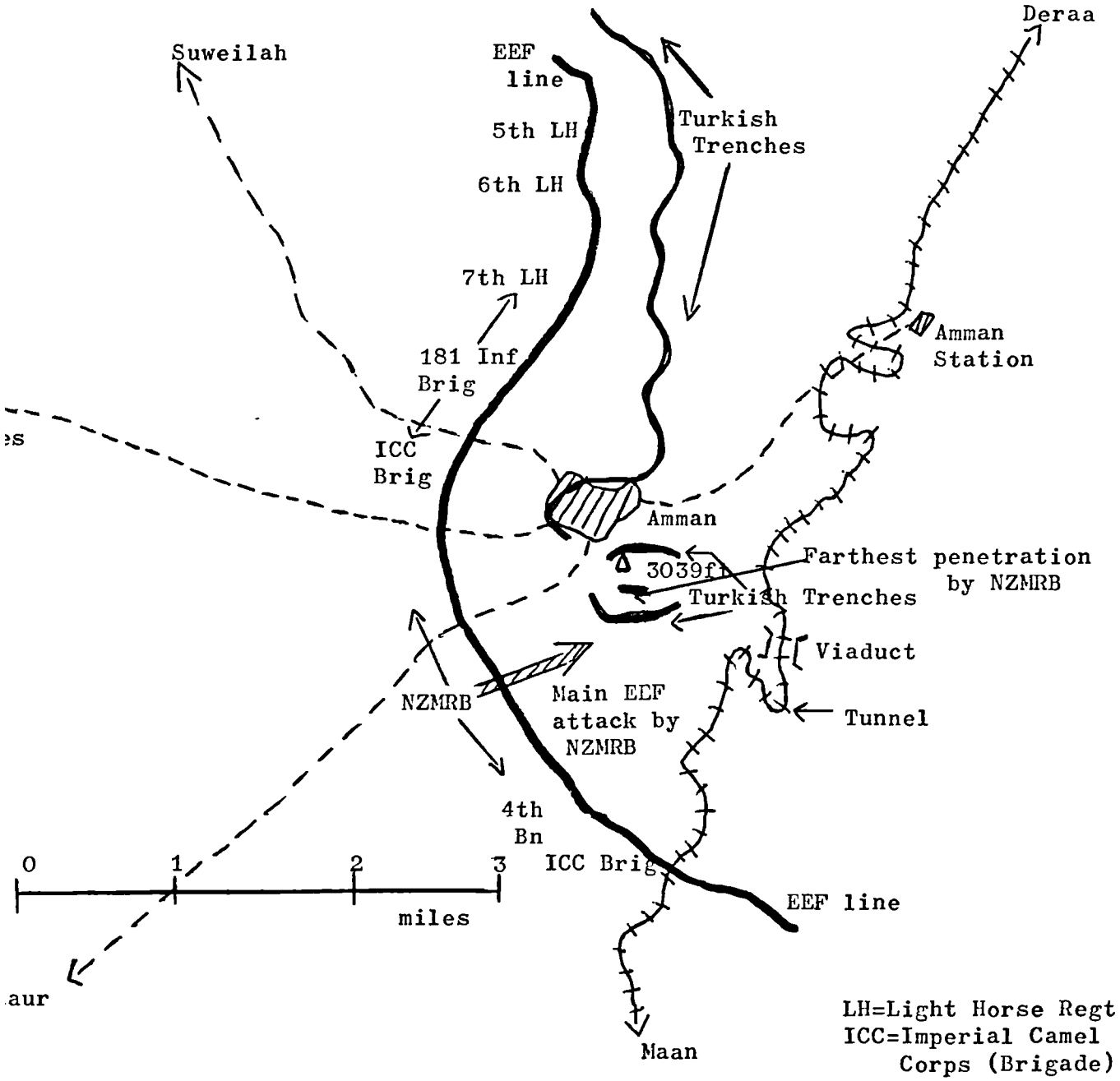
G.=Georgia
Az.=Azerbaijan
A.=Armenia

Map 5: Turkish Dispositions at the third battle of Gaza



From Commandant Larcher, 'La campagne du général de Falkenhayn en Palestine', Revue Militaire Française, Oct.1925, p.52.

Map 6: The First Trans-Jordan Raid



From p.208 of New Zealand Official History

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3. BATTLEFIELD TOURS (1990-93)

- Israel: Tel Aviv; Nazareth; Tiberias; Golan Heights; Jericho; Jerusalem.
- Egypt: Ismailiya; Suez Canal; Sinai.
- Syria: Damascus; Deraa; Aleppo.

Not that much evidence of the E.E.F.s campaign is left to be seen by the visitor today. The Israelis ripped up the railway in the Sinai from 1967 to reinforce their Bar Lev line. However, not all of the line that ran parallel to the canal was removed so on driving by the canal you can see the occasional railway wagon and old-style signal stand sitting incongruously in the desert, often next to Bedouin encampments. The British also built a light line down towards Sudr, and this twists its way by the road as you drive south towards El Tur. There is little left of the big port at Kantara where one now gets the ferry across the canal. The canal has been widened and deepened since the First World War, and the wars of 1956, 1967 and 1973 have added to altering its banks. The Arab-Israeli wars have also left war detritus littered across the western half of the Sinai: depressing evidence of the Sinai's continued history as a place of conflict.

In Israel the geography has changed greatly since 1918. Tel Aviv has been built to surpass Jaffa, and the coastal swamps, which once held crocodiles that attacked E.E.F. men swimming, have been drained. The Musmus Pass through which Allenby's cavalry travelled is now quickly traversed by bus en route to Afule and Nazareth: the initial objectives for the cavalry at the battle of Megiddo. Moving off road on the Golan Heights is now dangerous because of mines, but this was the high land that the Australian and 5th Divisions moved up onto following their instructions from 25 September to advance on Damascus. Travelling onto the Golan Heights one can return to Tiberias by way of the Benat Yakob Bridge, near to where the Australians in 1918 forded the Jordan as the retreating Turks had broken the bridge (there is a picture of the bridge in Hill, *Chauvel*, p.172).

In Syria the railway from Damascus to Deraa still runs, but only intermittently, and once at Deraa you can wonder around the run down station. The terminus at Damascus's Hejaz station has a beautiful lobby made of carved wood. The hill north of Damascus which impeded the movement of the Australians on 30 September 1918 is very noticeable, and its slopes are now covered with housing. In the Marquess of Anglesey's *History of the British Cavalry* volume on the Palestine campaign he includes a plate (46) which shows how narrow and deep the Barada Gorge to the west of Damascus was. The gorge is still there today, as is the railway which still runs up towards Beirut. The journey up to Aleppo now takes a few hours in a bus, very different from 1918 when the 5th Division and an attached Arab force struggled up the road to take Aleppo before the war finished. Once at Aleppo you can stay at the Baron's Hotel where Allenby and Lawrence lodged, and enjoy its old-world comforts. At the Dog River (Nahr el Kelb) near Beirut there is an inscription (a photograph of which can be found in Matthew Hughes, 'Australians and the fall of Damascus, 1 October 1918', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, April 1995, p.36: see appendix 7 of this thesis):-

THE DESERT MOUNTED CORPS
COMPOSED OF
BRITISH, AUSTRALIAN, NEW ZEALAND
AND INDIAN CAVALRY
WITH A FRENCH REGIMENT OF
SPAHIS AND CHASSEURS D'AFRIQUE
AND THE
ARAB FORCES OF KING HUSSEIN
CAPTURED DAMASCUS, HOMS AND ALEPPO
OCTOBER 1918

4. OTHER

Mr Amos Carmelli of the Weizmann Institute of Science at Rehovot in Israel provided me with rainfall figures for Palestine, 1917-1918; Dr M.H. van Meurs checked the Smuts papers in Pretoria for me; Dr Christopher Curtis and Ms Mary Gibson from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine kindly explained the workings of malaria to me; Mr Alec Hill, the author of *Chauvel of the Light Horse*, corresponded with me and provided valuable comments and clarification; Mr Tony Benn M.P. sent me information on his father who served in the Middle East during the First World War; Mr Nicholas Menzies at the B.B.C. kindly provided me with press cuttings and archival research at the B.B.C.; Dr Eugene Rogan at St. Antony's College Middle East Centre talked and corresponded with me providing much useful information; Dr David Omissi at the University of Hull kindly replied to a letter requesting information on British air policy in the Middle East.